



## Message from the president

### *What does CUFA do?*

by Charles Drainin

CUFA's principal purpose is—and I am quoting from our constitution—“to promote the professional and collegial interests of faculty members and librarians.” More than anything else, what this means is negotiating and administering the collective agreement.

Actually the constitution talks about “collective agreements” in the plural. Why is this? Don't we have just one? Yes, of course, there is only one collective agreement in force at any one time, but right now we are applying one (the one with yellow covers in the English version) and negotiating the next one (cover colour to be determined). Taking them in reverse order, I will say a little about progress in negotiations and then turn to some of the other things that CUFA does for its members.

Even though our negotiations are not especially acrimonious, it has often taken us a long time to negotiate collective agreements. We managed to start the current negotiations about six months before the May 31, 2007 expiration date of the current collective agreement, but even then it took the administration some months to come to the table. After about a year of face-to-face negotiations, we have almost finished the main non-monetary articles. There are important changes in the career articles that affect all members—appointments, reappointment and promotion, duties and responsibilities, and tenure (articles 12 through 19). Only the section on

*Academic Chairs and Special Professorships (Art. 12.08)* remains to be completed. Remembering that these are negotiations and the administration is also looking for changes, I can say that we have done well on balance. Although there are only a few paragraphs (in some cases a few words) that divide us, these are the important issues and the time taken on them is a better measure of their importance than the number of words. The sticking points are in Disciplinary Measures (article 29), in Governance, and in Pregnancy Leave and Parental Leave (Art. 35). Although it has not yet come to the table, eConcordia, an intractable issue up until now, will have to be revisited. Very soon, we will turn to monetary issues. Ideally the non-monetary issues will all have been resolved, but if some remain, they will be deferred, to be revisited at the end of these negotiations. We don't want to keep putting off the monetary articles.

What about the current (yellow cover) collective agreement? Although negotiations for the next agreement take a great deal of our time and energy—the negotiating team spends many hours a week on preparations as well as on

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actual negotiations—work to administer the current collective agreement does not stop.

Grievances affect only a few members directly, but the terms of their resolution affect us all. For almost two years the grievance process was stalled by what I will characterize as an uncooperative attitude on the part of the administration. In the fall there was a change of attitude; the process is now proceeding as it should, with an independent grievance committee hearing cases. When decisions are taken, we will report them. We are very pleased that the process is back on track.

Another issue that has concerned CUFA is governance. Although we did not get satisfactory answers to all the questions we asked about President Lajeunesse's abrupt departure, I can say that there has been a much more cooperative attitude on the part of the board of governors and the administration since the fall. The process of making senior administrative appointments has, by and large, been working well, and the administration has taken pains to consult CUFA on issues that in past were very problematic (I include the restitution of the grievance process among these issues).

There are many other ways CUFA supports its members that are not always well known. I will give one recent example. Some social science researchers, mostly in JMSB, have come to us to question the delays and difficulties in getting the necessary ethics approvals for their research involving human subjects. CUFA has made representations to the administration to minimize these problems. Daycare for members' children is another. At the upcoming Council and General meeting next week, we will report some encouraging news on this front. Interventions of this kind occur all the time. Sometimes they involve the collective agreement and are resolved in the shadow of the grievance process. Other times they are just a question of volunteers' time, our experience, and knowing who to deal with. In most cases, individual faculty members would not have the resources.

We encourage you to bring your concerns to us. I also remind you that there is a general meeting of the Association in April where you can meet colleagues from other Departments and Faculties, as well as the members of the executive and staff of CUFA. The meeting is on *Thursday, April 17, at noon in AD 308 on the Loyola campus*. It will begin with a buffet lunch; the formal meeting will be called to order at 1 PM in the same room.

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*Editor's note: The article on tuition fees in Quebec which follows is the first in a series of two that will appear in CUFA Report. The article to appear in the next issue will present an alternative view of this topic. Neither article is intended to represent the position of the CUFA Executive on this issue. We encourage you to write to the Executive on this and other topics and wherever possible we will reprint your letters in future issues. We also encourage you to communicate your views by using the discussion forum on the CUFA website at <http://www.cufa.net>.*

## **Tuition Fees: To freeze or not to freeze**

*by William Sims*

**R**ecently tuition fees for Quebecers attending Quebec universities increased for the first time since 1994. Despite these fees still being the lowest in the country, this increase has been greeted with dismay in many circles, especially among the students who must pay the higher fees. Nevertheless, university administrators have welcomed the increases, as a basis for refinancing Quebec universities and in the belief that a failure to do so could endanger the quality of post secondary education in the province. As things stand, the average tuition here is less than half of the national average. Many analysts have

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called for a spate of increases to bring the Quebec fees up to the national average.

There are many arguments against raising fees. Three traditionally used are: (1) higher tuition fees limit accessibility to a university education, especially for the economically disadvantaged; (2) university graduates eventually pay for their education through higher lifetime tax payments; and (3) the social benefits of an educated population rationalize the subsidization of post secondary education, and may even justify free tuition. Are such arguments persuasive?

Do higher tuition fees prevent some individuals from attending university?

Surely the role of prices is to ration scarce resources, so it would appear that the answer would be in the affirmative.

The evidence however, suggests that the relationship between university

attendance and tuition fees is not as simple as one might think. Despite the low fees, only about 41% of eligible Quebecers actually attend university in Quebec. This is the lowest participation rate in the country. In the U.S. the rate is 63%, and tuition fees are much higher<sup>1</sup>. Indeed several studies have discovered little or no correlation between tuition fees and university participation rates. This result may merely be indicative of the small proportion of the cost of attending university that tuition fees represent.

There is a large literature that focuses on the major determinants of attendance at university in Canada. Several studies have found that the odds of attending university are almost three times as high if one's parents attended university (Finnie,

Laporte and Lascelles, 2004)<sup>2</sup>. This is true whether fees are high or low. The barrier to university for many students is not just the cost of attendance and may even develop many years prior to graduation from high school (Sean Junor, 2007)<sup>3</sup>. The wealthier and more educated a student's family, the greater the probability that the student will expect to attain a university degree. This may be because educated parents pass on their preference for education to their children. Families with a greater preference for education provide more support for their children, enabling them to attain a post secondary education. In particular, they provide both moral support and financial support. The financial support usually starts early and can take the form

of tutors and mentors.

These benefits are not generally available to economically disadvantaged students and thus may form a barrier to a university education.

Since unemployment is lower, and income is higher for university graduates, the fact that most university students tend to have parents who are themselves

university graduates, suggests that university students tend to be drawn disproportionately from wealthier households. Thus keeping tuition fees low is tantamount to having the less privileged subsidize the education of the children of the well to do. Reducing tuition fees will do little to increase access to post secondary education, but it will provide an even larger subsidy to the rich.

In a recent study, co-authored by James McIntosh<sup>4</sup> of the Department of Economics, it was found that in Denmark, where there are no tuition fees and universal accessibility to all levels of education, family characteristics, rather

***“The wealthier and more educated a student’s family, the greater the probability that the student will expect to attain a university degree”.***

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than ability (*i.e.* IQ), were a primary determinant of a student's success in the education system. Similar results have also been found for Australia (W. Craig Riddell, 2003)<sup>5</sup>, which moved from a zero tuition fee regime in 1989, to one with substantially higher tuition fees and an income contingent student loan program. Analysts have concluded that this did not lead to any significant deterioration in the access to university, in aggregate or among the disadvantaged. The tendency, observed in North America, for university students to come from backgrounds that involved educated, high-income parents, was also found in Denmark and Australia (both before and after the introduction of fees). These results suggest that freezing or reducing tuition fees is unlikely to increase the accessibility of the less advantaged to university.

The cost of education paid by a student is, of course, an investment in that student's human capital. Studies suggest that this investment yields a significant positive return that varies across disciplines. Thus the personal returns from education must exceed its private costs. If university graduates make higher incomes than non-grads then they will pay higher taxes over their lifetime. Does this not suggest that the subsidy paid to university students will be more than paid back? This argument is flawed. Virtually all investments that yield a good return also produce significant tax revenue. Why should one type of investment that yields a high rate of return be paid for largely by the government, while other investments receive no such support?

One possible answer to this question is that education has a value to society that exceeds its personal value to the individual student. The difference between the social and personal value of education, which cannot be captured or internalized by the individual, is its external value. When a commodity or service exhibits this characteristic, there is a tendency for individuals to underinvest in it. Such commodities

do warrant state subsidies to induce individuals to undertake such investments. Some have suggested that this might even justify a system of free tuition, but this argument is faulty. Admission to university is based on a student's record at CEGEP or secondary school. This implies that participation is not universal, and thus if a university education were free, those who do not participate would subsidize those who do. Hardly a policy designed to improve equity.

This is not to say that there should be no subsidy to education. There is little question that society at large should be willing to incur some of the costs of a more educated population, at least to the degree that this provides social benefits in excess of the personal benefits. Nothing stated here, however justifies a 100% subsidy, or even the low tuition rates now in effect in Quebec. Many economists carrying out research in this area suggest that a student share of at least 30% of their total educational costs (Robert Lacroix and Michel Trahan, 2007)<sup>6</sup> would be appropriate. Such a policy instituted here would bring tuition fees in Quebec to about the national average. Given that there is a high personal return to a university education and that these tuition fees (relative to foregone income), make up a small part of the individual's cost of attending university, suggests that such increases are unlikely to have a substantial impact on participation rates.

Even if subsidized tuition fees did improve the participation rate of less advantaged students at university, it is a poorly targeted policy. It results in a significant, but unintended, windfall to high income families. Higher tuition fees used to finance support for students from lower income families seems likely to be a more efficacious method of achieving the desired result.

A recent study undertaken for the Quebec government found that a policy of raising tuition fees to the national average, and then helping the financially disadvantaged, could be designed to have the same effect on university enrollments in

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Quebec as a policy of free tuition. The difference being that the program of free tuition would involve increased public expenditures of \$150 million, whereas the higher tuition policy could generate the same increase in enrollments, while actually generating extra government revenues. (Valérie Vierstraete, 2007)<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup><http://www.canada.com/montrealgazette/news/montreal/story.html?id=5eda9c95-7861-4aaf-9535-8709b80973ea>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.statcan.ca/english/research/11F0019MIE/11F0019MIE2004226.pdf>

<sup>3</sup><http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20071009.urc-access2-1016/BNSStory/education/home>

<sup>4</sup><http://www.springerlink.com/content/j5737v834271g435/>

<sup>5</sup><http://www.law-lib.utoronto.ca/investing/reports/rp29.pdf>

<sup>6</sup><http://www.cirano.qc.ca/pdf/publication/2007RB-01.pdf>

<sup>7</sup>[http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/modesFinancement/pdf/droits\\_scolarite.pdf](http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/modesFinancement/pdf/droits_scolarite.pdf)

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## CUFA responds to Gazette article

**W**ith regard to *Concordia yanks on purse strings* (which appeared in the April 3, 2008 edition of the Montreal Gazette), Shelley Reuter (CUFA Executive, Member-at-large) wrote, it is unfortunate that Peggy Curran did not think to consult the university's part-time and full-time faculty associations, especially since one of these unions (CUPFA) is currently on strike, something of which she is evidently aware ("Concordia part-time teachers ready to walk out of class" – 26 March 2008). Had she contacted the other union (CUFA), she would have discovered that we are about to begin salary negotiations. I suspect, too, that she would have drawn the conclusion many of us at Concordia have come to – that the timing of the President's missive is more than just a coincidence.

*Editor's note: The foregoing was slightly edited when it was published as a Letter to the Editor in the Montreal Gazette on April 5, 2008*

## Mark your calendar!

Don't forget to mark your calendar for CUFA's Beginning of Summer Party

When: Friday on May 23, 2008

Where: Roof-top reception room in the EV Building (EV 11<sup>th</sup> floor enter on McKay)

Time: 5 to 8 pm.

We will have as special guests, delegates to the meeting of the College and University Retiree Associations of Canada which is holding its annual conference at Concordia that week.

## Contacting the Executive

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The CUFA offices are located at the Loyola Campus in Hingston Hall, HB 109.

## Upcoming Council and General Meeting

When: Thursday, April 17, 2008

Where: Loyola Campus AD308

Time: 1:00 PM

The meeting will be preceded by a hot and cold buffet lunch that will be served starting at noon.

All CUFA members are invited and we encourage you to attend

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Editorial Board: Aaron Brauer, Jean Mayer, William Sims