



Negotiations News



Bargaining information for OPSEU members in the CAAT-Academic Division

Task force report key to quality college education

The principal and consistent theme of the Report of the Workload Task Force is that Ontario College workload assignment and general educational practices should resemble those found in Ontario universities. College students should be treated no differently than their equivalents at universities when it comes to the quality of services their schools provide. The most significant part of that service is their direct relationship with teachers, counselors, and librarians. That relationship is the focus of the Workload Task Force and it is the source for its observations and recommendations.

The Task Force found quality of education suffers in the absence of collegial decision making. Even as Ontario colleges have matured over the past 50 years, they have failed to incorporate collegial decision making practices in their methods of developing and assigning curriculum and training in ways that are commonplace at our universities.

Academic freedom in the educational environment was also highlighted by the Task Force. Academic freedom must be vigorously exercised in post-secondary institutions if colleges are able to deliver high quality academic services to their students.

Institutional cultures do not change easily and, accordingly, the Task Force makes general and specific recommendations that collegiality and academic freedom should be negotiated into

faculty collective agreements. The Task Force commented on issues of distrust, morale and control. Today, more than ever, these issues are front and center as negotiators for the Colleges have walked away from the bargaining table and have imposed terms and conditions of employment that fail to comply with the Task Force's directions.

Of course the Colleges realize they cannot brazenly thumb their nose at the Task Force Report so they purport to address some of the recommendations in their imposed terms. However, even a quick glance at their terms reveals the gaping shortfall between the recommendations of the task force and their own feeble negotiating position.

The key recommendations of the Task Force are: flexibility in scheduling; the selection of evaluation methods; student numbers above the norm; and academic freedom, collegiality, and professional development. The nine sub-recommendations all speak to scheduling flexibility that is handled fairly.

The faculty union negotiating proposal is straight forward: we seek to incorporate the overriding principles and the explicit recommendations of the Task Force into our next collective agreement. That is the issue in dispute in this round of negotiations. Despite the fact

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their representative endorsed the Task Force report, the Colleges refuse to adopt the principles and its recommendations.

The Colleges originally claimed that the recommendations were merely guidelines. Then they said they would address the recommendations. Finally, when they acknowledged they would ignore several key recommendations, they folded their tent and walked away from the bargaining table.

The great irony in the College's position is that by increasing collegiality in decision making and by providing academic freedom, the quality

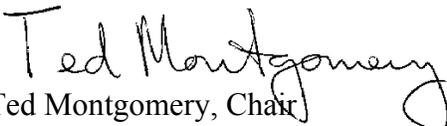
of education for students would improve and thereby enhance the position of college managers, too.

The post-secondary education world is changing. More than ever colleges are forging close relations with universities. Colleges are granting more and more degrees. The value of those degrees – and the academic benefits our students will gain as a result – will depend, in the end, on the extent to which Ontario's colleges indicate that they are genuinely prepared to adopt the principles that give strength and positive reputation to Ontario universities.

The Report of the Workload Task Force was released on March 20, 2009. The Task Force was mandated by William Kaplan in his awarded settlement of the March 2006 faculty strike. The 2009 Task Force was chaired by Wes Rayner, an arbitrator and former Dean of the University of Western Ontario Law School. Other members were Dr. Marcus Harvey, appointed by the Union, and Mr. Morris Uremovich, appointed by the Council. Their final report was unanimous.

http://www.opseu.org/caat/caat_ac/WorkloadTaskforceReport_Mar_2009.pdf

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