

Contents of This Issue

Nursing Program Admissions Suspended

College of Nurses of Ontario to review diploma Nursing program,, in light of declining Seneca grad performance on Nat'l registration exams: **Pages 1,2**

Seneca's Worst KPI Performance Ever?

Seneca comes in dead last of all Ontario CAATs in several major published metrics: **Pages 1,3,6**

Bargaining Team Updates

News from the elected OPSEU CAAT-A bargaining team, heading into this summer's contract negotiations: **Pages 4,6**

Student Accommodations and Workload

In a formal hearing, Seneca management lawyers argued that students' special needs create no additional work for faculty: **Pages 5,6**

A One-Page Guide to the SWF

Understand the SWF and whether it accurately measures a FT faculty workload: **Page 7**

Accommodations and Legal Threats

One professor's nightmare: **Page 8:**

Seneca Declines Further in Provincewide Key Performance Indicators

Seneca finishes last among Ontario Colleges in 3 of 5 published metrics; grad employment rate 5% below GTA college average

Figuring out how well Seneca College is doing is difficult. Last December, for instance, Seneca was (as usual) listed among the top 100 employers in the GTA. There were pats on the back all-round as college administrators celebrated such things as paid vacations, parental leaves and defined-benefit pensions for employees.

Continued on page 3

Diploma Nursing Program Admissions Suspended Pending Regulatory Body Review

Review follows decline in program graduates' performance in national certification exams; program's future to be determined at June College of Nurses of Ontario council meeting

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In what is possibly the most startling evidence that declining academic standards at Seneca College are threatening both the success of our graduates and the viability of our programs, the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) has placed the status of Seneca College's Practical Nursing (PN) diploma program in question.

The CNO is the governing body for Ontario's nurses. It establishes requirements for practicing nurses, and enforces professional standards. It does so in part by reviewing and approving all practical nursing programs in Ontario, to ensure that the graduates of these programs possess the required entry-to-practice competencies.

Continued on page 2

General Membership Meeting

Wednesday, June 14

Free Buffet Dinner at 6:00; Meeting at 6:30

Dragon Pearl Buffet

865 York Mills Rd. (East of Don Mills)

Agenda

- Special Officer Election: V.P. Equity
- Contract Negotiations Update from Bargaining Team Chair, Prof. J.P. Hornick
- How should you prepare for a possible October strike?
- What you need to know about Student Accommodations!

All FT and PL faculty (including PL in the last 12 months) invited.

Child/Eldercare expenses will be reimbursed

Diploma Nursing Program Admissions Suspended Pending Accrediting Body Review

(Continued from page 1)

In 2014, Seneca's PN program had been placed on a kind of probation by the CNO, given the status of "Approved with Conditions", as a consequence of graduates' substandard results on the national registration exam, compared to provincewide average passing rates.

That status, however, changed for the worse in March, when Seneca closed admissions to incoming or transferring students to the PN diploma program, the day after meeting with the CNO Council to discuss the passing rates of program graduates in last year's national registration exam.

The CNO has stated on its website that its decision regarding the status of Seneca's PN program will be deferred until June. In the meantime, the program has submitted a comprehensive curriculum review.

To our knowledge, no Seneca College program has ever been compelled to suspend incoming students pending the results of a regulatory body's decision. And while PN programs at five other Colleges are currently "approved with conditions" according to the CNO website, Seneca's program is the only one whose conditional approval has been withheld, pending formal CNO Council review.

Seneca management claims that the changed status is a consequence of a slight (0.9%) drop in the exam performance of Seneca's PN graduates (of both the day program and Continuing Education) since the previous year, despite the fact that the performance of Seneca's graduates had been steadily (and, in the case of Continuing Education, dramatically) rising over the past five years.

CNO publications of data concerning the national registration exams do shed light on the performance of Seneca graduates. Despite Seneca's improvements in recent years, **more than 1 in 9 graduates of Seneca's PN programs failed to pass the national registration exam after three attempts**, and our passing rates are 4.9% below the provincial average of college Nursing program graduates.

Given those deficits—and the fact that Seneca PN graduates have performed below the provincewide average for the last four years—the CNO may have been particularly concerned to see a decline, however small, in the performance of Seneca PN graduates last year.

Local 560 maintains that these statistics, while alarming, remain consistent with other statistical evidence of critical

widespread problems with our academic standards, as indicated in the KPI surveys of the satisfaction of Seneca's graduates, and their employers (who reported a 3.6% drop in satisfaction from 2013 to 2016).

We also note the College's decision in 2014 to exclude faculty from the students' field placements, which ensured that students would not be supervised and evaluated on-site by professors, but exclusively by part-time support staff.

Given the general degradation of academic standards at Seneca College, we must be grateful that regulatory bodies are willing to impose standards that focus on the *quality* of our graduates' knowledge and skills, even as we are forced to ask why Seneca College management has failed to uphold those standards.

The Practical Nursing program's current endangered status is a consequence of a managerial model that relies excessively on vulnerable, precarious labour, and excludes faculty from shared governance and meaningful decision-making in issues of staffing, curriculum, and student evaluation. Only a model that puts genuine decision-making authority in the hands of qualified faculty can ensure the necessary excellence of the program and its graduates, upon whom the health and well-being of Ontarians depends.

Puzzling...

Today's math challenge: If a College President were to authorize spending over \$500,000 on marketing (including pricey television advertising on sports networks) leading up to a Spring Open House, how many contract faculty would need to be deprived of extended health benefits, in order to pay for it?



Seneca Declines Further in Provincewide Key Performance Indicators

(Continued from page 1)

(These benefits, of course, were won through our concerted support of the Collective Bargaining process and through changes in legislation backed by Unions—often against significant push-back by the employers.)

Then, this past April 19, Colleges Ontario released the annual Key Performance Indicator results for Ontario colleges (available online at http://www.collegesontario.org/outcomes/key-performance-indicators/2017KPIreport_Eng_final.pdf). Not much has been said by Seneca management about them; not much needs to be.

The Results

Of the 24 Ontario public Colleges, Seneca placed dead last in graduate employment rates (75.6%), in overall “student satisfaction” (72.5%), and in graduation rates (60.4%). We were tied for last in student perception that they are getting “useful knowledge and skills,” came in 23rd of 24 in student assessment of “quality of service,” and tied for 22nd in student assessment of quality of the learning “experience.”

There are, of course, explanations and mitigating circumstances. For example, students in the GTA may be a little jaded or perhaps have higher expectations and/or more challenging job prospects. But even bearing that in mind, Seneca still performed worse than all other GTA Colleges in several metrics.

Strikingly for any discussion of our performance as a College, our graduate employment rate dropped 3.2% since last year’s KPIs (at a time when the provincial average dropped only 0.6%), and the satisfaction rate of their employers who hired our recent graduates dropped another 1%, for a total drop of 3.7% since the introduction of the 2012-17 Academic Plan.

Certainly, KPIs are unreliable measures of educational quality—they aim to measure perceived satisfaction, which is very different from measuring quality. But, whatever the methodological faults of the KPIs, it remains true that Seneca was once among the most admired colleges in Ontario. Now? Apparently not so much.

What is to be done?

Our situation may be serious, but no one should panic. The matter deserves serious reflection and sober judgement, not a hunt for scapegoats. We should take a breath. We should also consider becoming authentically “innovative.” We should consider genuinely “thinking outside the box.” of hyper-managerialism. Seneca didn’t invent it, but it has embraced it more than any other Ontario public college.

A corporate culture imposes increasingly authoritarian hierarchies and impedes genuine creativity for both faculty and students. A discount department store model transforms professors into the academic equivalent of Walmart Associates, and treats students as objects on an ever-more-crowded assembly line.

Under this ever-evolving “business plan,” precarious workers comprise over 60% of the daytime teaching staff, yet their labour is mercilessly exploited and they are denied liveable wages and even the most limited rights and benefits that they deserve.

Seneca’s dismal performance performance in the KPIs inspires concerns about the erosion of the classroom learning experience we provide to our students and of our graduates’ skills. This erosion is not the result of insufficient marketing or branding, and it can’t be solved through more or better marketing or branding.

Continued on page 6

Academic Quality Survey

Which Policy Has Hurt Seneca’s Academic Quality the Most?

A comparison of KPIs from prior to the implementation of the 2012-17 Academic Plan to the present day shows a decline in the employment rate of Seneca’s graduates, as well as a decline in the satisfaction rates of Seneca’s students and graduates, and their employers.

Of the following changes made by Seneca’s Senior Management throughout the 2012-17 Academic Plan’s implementation, which do you believe has most hurt Seneca’s academic standards?

Reducing instructional hours below Ministry guidelines

Reducing the passing grade for courses

Permitting students to graduate without a literature Gen Ed course

Permitting students to graduate with five or more “D” grades

Removing faculty from field placement supervision

Eliminating days of instruction for student orientation

Enabling students in daytime programs to take Con Ed courses for credit

Increasing class sizes

Bonus Question: Can you name a single College-wide policy implemented by Senior management since 2012 that has improved the quality of education at Seneca College?

Please submit your vote at:
<https://is.gd/AcQuSe>

College Faculty 2017 Bargaining FAQ

1. How are bargaining demands created?

Demands were generated through local demand set meetings held at all 24 faculty locals. Each local then sent their top ten demands to the bargaining team so they could be included in the provincial demand set book.

Each academic local sent delegates to the provincial demand set meeting, held on March 4 and 5, 2017, in Toronto. In the past, individual bargaining demands passed at one of the 24 local demand-set meetings would be brought to the floor at the provincial meeting. However, this year the bargaining team took a different approach in order to focus our demands and ensure that all faculty groups are represented. The team aggregated all of the local demands received into 10 global demands, three demands that address the issues of librarians and counselors, and three demands that address the issues of partial load faculty

Delegates at the provincial meeting then chose to move and debate the bargaining team demands. All 16 of these demands were passed by the delegates at the meeting. These demands are the initial demands set by the provincial CAAT-A bargaining team and may be altered as bargaining progresses.

2. What are our top demands?

Coming out of the provincial demand set meeting, the global demands were:

1. Establish academic freedom and collegial governance.
2. Improve the salary grids and wages to better our position in relation to our comparator groups and to account for inflation.
3. Improve job security, complement, and layoff language.
4. Improve workload factors to provide adequate time for academic work.
5. Prevent the contracting out, privatization, or outsourcing of faculty work in whole or in part.
6. Improve workload language to ensure that all faculty work is recorded on the SWF and that volunteerism is eliminated
7. Strengthen intellectual property rights.
8. Improved benefit coverage for all faculty.
9. Improve language for replacement and consideration.
10. Strengthen language to improve union representation of members working inside and outside the Province of Ontario

Demands for counselors and librarians included a workload formula, workload and caseload limits for counsellors and creating a ratio of librarians and counsellors to number of students.

The top demands for partial load were for greater job security and parity in workload calculation between full time and partial load and to record and compensate total partial-load workload.

3. How are demands turned into contract language?

From April to June the bargaining team puts the demands passed at provincial demand setting into contract language. They do this by linking demands to the current Collective Agreement (CA) language and looking at language proposed in previous rounds of bargaining and contained in other faculty CAs. The team attempts to express the intent of demands in language that is clear, concise, and legally sound.

Consultation with OPSEU legal counsel, the OPSEU research department and with the Canadian Association of University Teachers is an important part of this process.

Extracted from the College Faculty 2017 Bargaining FAQ, which also includes information about the bargaining process and strike pay. The complete document is located by clicking the “Bargaining 2017” link at the top of <http://www.opseu560.org>

College Denies that Accommodating Special Needs Students Requires Additional SWF Time

Recent Ontario legislation and guidelines from the Ontario Human Rights Commission underscore the legal importance of accommodating students with special needs.

For this reason, it was shocking and disturbing to hear the College formally *deny* that students with special needs had, in fact, special needs that may require special attention from faculty, and that faculty may require additional SWFed time to accommodate.

When a professor sought recognition on his SWF of the work that he felt was required to accommodate students with special needs, the College – at a January 31 Workload Resolution Arbitration hearing with Seneca’s then-Director of Labour Relations, Karen Tobin, present for the College – argued that while faculty have *do* a duty to accommodate students, they do *not* have the right to have the time associated with that workload represented on their SWF.

What does the Collective Agreement say?

The Collective Agreement between OPSEU and the Ontario Colleges clearly permits Full-Time faculty to be credited with sufficient time to perform all of the work that they are assigned. This is found in at least three parts of Article 11 of the CA: i) The point that a FT professor’s workload shall not exceed 44 hours without voluntary overtime; ii) The point that “additional hours shall be attributed” on the SWF where atypical circumstances render the workload “not adequately reflected” by the assigned SWF formulas; and iii) The point that the bipartisan Workload Monitoring Group, when evaluating the workloads of FT faculty may consider many “variables affecting assignments”, including (but not at all limited to) the number of students in class, the sophistication of the subjects being taught, and, explicitly, *students with special needs*.

Seneca Management’s Disregard for Accommodation Workload

The College’s position was that faculty deserve *no* additional time on their SWF for students with special needs, regardless of how many hours accommodating those students require. In short, the College argued that faculty have a *responsibility* to accommodate, but no *right* to be credited with the time that such accommodation would require.

Seneca College management’s profound disregard for the special needs of accommodated students become more explicit in that hearing, when the College’s lawyer – again, accompanied by Karen Tobin, then-Director of Labour Relations at Seneca – claimed that the needs of accommodated students are no different than the needs of all other students. He stated, “All students have needs” and argued that faculty do exactly the same work for students with special needs as for any other students, namely, “...preparing classes, evaluating students, and meeting with students out of class”.

The one condition that, according to Seneca College management, might entitle faculty to additional time to deal with students with special needs would be if they could demonstrate that they have many more such students than their colleagues. Needless to say, College managers know that no professor could ever make such a claim, since it would require access to confidential information. As well, the implication of the College’s argument is that if every student required accommodation, no professor would be entitled to additional time to accommodate them.

“Raindrops Can Create a Huge River”

In her judgment, the Workload Resolution Arbitrator disagreed with the College’s arguments that faculty have no right to additional time on their SWF; she noted that additional time may be needed to accommodate students with special needs, when those accommodations can be shown to significantly increase faculty workload.

Continued on page 6

The Stakes of This Round of Bargaining: \$20/hour Teachers Proposed at Mohawk College

Mohawk College in Hamilton features a summer program taught in conjunction with a Quebec CEGEP. Traditionally, Mohawk has staffed similar programs with Mohawk employees who were members of our provincewide CAAT-A bargaining unit.

However, this spring, Mohawk informed its faculty union of its intention to hire outside teachers to staff this program. The proposed wage for these “insourced” teachers? \$20 per hour.

This is why this summer’s renegotiation of our Collective Agreement is crucial. While our last round of bargaining provided new provisions to protect members’ jobs from outsourcing, those provisions are set to expire with our current Collective Agreement, in September. **This point cannot be made more clearly: Our very jobs depend on our willingness to fight to protect the integrity of our bargaining unit.**

Keeping the same Collective Agreement will *not* guarantee the same results for us as Union members, as over 150 formerly-Partial-Load faculty at Seneca can testify! Our jobs can only be protected by introducing meaningful and durable language to ensure the integrity of our bargaining unit.

Mohawk recently announced that it was discontinuing its plan to insource teachers for \$20/hour. That is a victory, but it demonstrates that our hard-won benefits can only be preserved through concerted, collective effort, and a willingness to publicly expose poor management practices.

College Denies that Special Needs Accommodations Require Additional SWF Time

(Continued from page 5)

Her award recognized the considerable workload that even mundane accommodations can produce, when they are multiplied by a large number of accommodated students. It states, “There is no doubt that raindrops can create a huge river. Tasks which may not involve a lot of work can be onerous if they have to be completed in large volumes.” She did, however, reinforce that a successful faculty workload complaint *must persuasively demonstrate* that accommodating students requires “significant additional work over the course of the term”.

Your Responsibility to Your Students and Yourself

Our need to accommodate students is well-recognized. And now, an arbitrator has upheld the College’s obligation to provide additional time on a SWF where the faculty can persuasively demonstrate the student accommodations create significant workload not demonstrated on the SWF.

For this reason, Local 560 encourages faculty to keep careful track of the time required for accommodating students, much like faculty should keep careful track of the actual time that they spend on all other aspects of their workload. In addition,

where a faculty member is informed of student accommodations that are likely to require a considerable amount of work, the faculty should contact their manager and the Workload Monitoring Group immediately, in order to ensure that the SWF is modified appropriately.

It is our collective position that the College’s legal obligation to accommodate students confers a legal obligation to ensure that faculty have sufficient time to accommodate students.

Seneca Declines Further in KPIs

(Continued from page 3)

Having seen the quantified impact of a top-down, hyper-managerial model in which faculty are denied any meaningful voice in academic decision-making, it may be time to suggest a better way. From top to bottom, there must be more transparency, collegiality and co-determination. If Seneca wants to merit “top employer” status, and to start clawing its way back up the KPI ladder, it could do no better than to redesign management-faculty relations.

Managerial apologists (as well as demoralized faculty who have abandoned hope) will dismiss such goals as idealistic, unrealistic or, worse, nostalgic. This is nonsense! Nothing compels Seneca management to disregard its greatest asset and the ultimate source of its value to the province: the expertise of its teachers. Fighting for collegial decision-making and meaningful faculty authority is not idealistic posturing; it’s Seneca’s last, best chance for success.

New to Our Bargaining Process: The BAC

An unprecedented level of input for College Locals and Partial-Load faculty in the bargaining process

The Bargaining Advisory Committee (BAC) is a new structure in CAAT-A negotiations. It is comprised of 24 full-time members (selected by Local Executives) and 8 partial load faculty members from around the province.

The BAC represents a new direction intended to improve communication, transparency, and decision-making; to involve contract faculty directly in the bargaining process; and to draw on the collective knowledge of our division, as well as recognize unique regional and local concerns. This approach is a successful structure used by other education unions to win gains in times of austerity. One of the key benefits of the BAC is that it serves as another way to demonstrate solidarity to and by our members.

The mandate of the BAC is to act as a resource to the bargaining team during negotiations. The BAC, along with all local presidents, will review any proposed contract language before the bargaining team agrees to the proposed language. This ensures that each region is represented; that there is representation from small, medium, and large colleges; **and that the viewpoints of partial-load members are adequately represented and considered.**

Of course, voting for or against a settlement rests with the full membership. Consultations with the BAC are intended to gather the widest scope of representation on the issues on the bargaining table, and represent the widest support for these issues, and to provide additional energy for mobilizing.

Taken from the second Negotiations Bulletin put out by our CAAT-A bargaining team, dated March 2017. All negotiations bulletins are available by clicking the “Bargaining 2017” link at the top of <http://www.opseu560.org>

Editor’s Note: Corrected Newsletter Version

An earlier version of this newsletter featured unconfirmed statements in its headline and cover article. Following the distribution of some paper copies of that version on two campuses, Local 560 has endeavoured to recall those copies promptly, and replace them with copies of this corrected version. We regret any error.

A Very Short Explanation of the SWF

(All information derived from Article 11 of the Collective Agreement @ www.opseu560.org)

SWF = Standard Workload Formula, a means of measuring assigned workload for FT faculty
Timeline:

- SWF to be delivered no later than 6 weeks prior to assigned workload period (*excluding* vacation)
- Delivery must follow: 1. Discussion of workload between manager + faculty member, and 2. Discussion of evaluation factors for each course with all faculty who teach that course
- Faculty have 5 days to review SWF and accept it or refer it to Workload Monitoring Group (WGM)

Total Workload = Teaching Contact Hours (TCH) + Prep Hours + Evaluation Hours + Complementary Hours

Teaching Contact Hours (TCH)

(*cf. Art. 11.01B,C*)

- Hours scheduled in classroom
- For online courses, should be comparable to classroom hours of standard delivery
- Should not necessarily be halved for team-taught courses

Evaluation Hours

= $TCH \times \text{students} \times \text{evaluation factor}$ (*cf. Art. 11.01E*)

Evaluation factor is determined by the different *modes* of evaluation for each course

Essay (“E” – 0.03 hours/student/TCH): Evaluation requiring interpretation; part-marks could be given

Routine/Assisted (“R” – 0.015 hours/student/TCH): Evaluation could be completed using Scantron or graded by computer

In-Process (“P” – 0.0092 hours/student/TCH): Grade calculate within class time, not outside of class

Notes:

- Evaluation factors listed on SWF should correspond logically to the list of assignments on Course Outline
- A 3-TCH Course with 100% “Essay” evaluation would grant 5.4 minutes weekly (76 minutes per semester) per student for feedback/evaluation
- The “Additional Attributed Hours for Preparation” column is on the SWF for when the factor doesn’t truly capture the time needed for feedback/evaluation

Preparation Hours

= $TCH \times \text{Prep Factor}$ (*cf. Art. 11.01D*)

Factors:

New (“N” – 1.1 Prep hour per TCH): Course never taught or not taught since significant revision of curriculum

Established A (“EA” – 0.8 Prep hours per TCH): Course not taught in last 3 years; no significant revision since then

Established B (“EB” – 0.6 Prep hours per TCH):

Course taught w/in last 3 years; no significant revision since then

Repeat A (“RA” – 0.45 Prep hours per TCH): Additional section of a course already listed on the SWF as “N”, “EA” or “EB”, taught to students in different programs or levels

Repeat B (“RB” – 0.35 Prep hours per TCH): Additional section of a course already listed on the SWF as “N”, “EA” or “EB”, taught to students in exactly the same program and level

Note: “Additional Attributed Hours for Preparation” column is on SWF for when the factor doesn’t truly capture the preparation required

Complementary Factors

(*cf. Art. 11.01F*)

Includes 4 hours for out-of-class assistance to students + 2 hours for normal administrative tasks

All other assigned work should be included (e.g., meetings, course development, required liaising with other faculty; guest lecturing; liaising for co-op)

Incomplete list of possible reasons why a SWF might need correction, to measure actual workload (from Art. 11.02 C2): Special-needs students, technological demands, need to develop curriculum, degree-level courses, student research demands, lab setup, hybrid or online teaching needs, faculty research expectations.

If your SWF doesn't capture or reflect your total actual workload: 1. If within 5 days of receipt, check box marked “SWF Referred to Workload Monitoring Group”, sign, keep a photocopy and e-mail Frank Yee at fyee@opseu560.org. 2. Otherwise, a) inform manager of inaccuracy, b) request a written response within 7 days, then contact Workload Monitoring Group at fyee@opseu560.org.

Faculty Member Facing HRTO Complaint over Accommodations

There are none who are more committed to students' access to quality education than our members. Yet, as a cautionary tale we sadly recount the circumstances that find one of our number answering to a discrimination charge before the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HTRO). If nothing else, we must realize that poorly implemented college systems expose all of us to this same risk.

The story begins with our member's commitment to accommodating their students in a course that requires evaluation of hands-on technical skills—evaluations that in turn require equipment and systems found only in specialized lab environments, not Test Centres. Historically, students with accommodation needs have had them successfully met in that lab environment for many years. Even this time around, the accommodation needs of students were satisfactorily met in the lab, but one student took exception and refused to be examined in the lab.

On the student's Accommodation Letter, it read (as it does on many such letters), "Accommodation: Test Center". It did not say, "Test Center, or other suitable place where accommodation needs can be met satisfactorily". This is at the crux of the problem. Since the purpose of accommodations is to permit all students an equal opportunity to perform the required tasks, it follows that any room required by an accommodation must be suitable to permit the accommodated student to complete the evaluation. In this case, the official Test Center was wholly unsuited to the examination, as it lacked the specialized nature of the equipment and systems required. Our member's department Chair even confirmed that performing the examination in the Test Center was not possible.

The student, however, refused to be evaluated in the lab environment and proceeded to file a discrimination charge against our member with both the college and the Human Rights Commission of Ontario. The charge: That not permitting the student to use the Test Center was a deliberate act of discrimination. This, despite the fact that it was actually impossible to do the evaluation in the Test Center, and that all of the student's noted accommodations (extra time, use of computers, etc.) would have been met in the lab environment.

OPSEU Part-Time/Sessional Unionizing Drive

Over one third of Seneca Faculty are Part-Time or Sessional

That means that over *one-third* of our colleagues...

...never get a vacation or sick day

...get paid less per hour than Partial-Load and Full-Time faculty, for doing the same work

...have no right to be considered as internal candidates when FT positions open

If you're a part-time or sessional faculty member, it's in your interest to unionize, to ensure your rights and improve your job security

If you're a FT or PL faculty member, it's in your interest to support this union drive, to ensure that we can work together for a better workplace and rights for all.



Sign up

Encourage PT Faculty to Sign Up
<http://www.contractfaculty.ca>

Months later, the case still stands before the HRTO. Frankly, our colleague should not even have standing in the matter. The issue is between the college and the student; faculty cannot change the venue limitations set up by the college. Should Accommodation Letters be worded by the College in a way that permits faculty to apply judgement in order to ensure that students are appropriately accommodated? We argue they should be. Could this grievance have been avoided if the lab environment had been delegated by the college as an appropriate alternate Test Center? Clearly, yes. Should the college be accountable for providing suitable environments in which to administer all accommodations? We think so, but it remains our Union colleague who stands accused, alongside but independent of the college.

How to Protect Yourself

When you have an issue of any kind with accommodation (or require clarification), ensure that you have a discussion with the student's Counsellor, even if it is unlikely that the counsellor will be able to solve the problem. Equally, bring the matter to the attention of your Chair. As well, please involve your union steward and the union Local as early as possible when a difficulty arises (and hopefully long before the lawyers get involved). Lastly, and more generally, consider how important academic freedom (the independence of curriculum and grading from the administration of the colleges) and academic integrity are for our collective efforts to defend the quality of education that we offer.