

## **President's Note**

December 2019

Happy Holidays!

As the year comes to an end, I want to recount some key initiatives that were undertaken on behalf of Local 560's membership.

The Local has finally moved into a new office after a lengthy search. Our new office, located at 245 Fairview Mall Drive, suite 402, is an accessible space, with power-assist doors and elevator. Moreover, the office is readily accessible via surface and subway routes, and it has free surface-level parking.

Our financial house is being placed in order, many thanks to our Treasurer, Jon Olinski who was vital to this success. Under my supervision, the accounting system has been moved from a cash-based to accrual system, which allows for detailed reporting on expenditures and revenues. The system now conforms to the standard financial and accounting practices and OPSEU's Best Practices Toolkit and our Constitution.

We have submitted financial rebates, including outstanding ones from previous years, which will replenish the Local 560 account. We submitted the 2016 & 2017 Trustee Audited Reports (TARS) and were reimbursed. The Local is currently working on the 2018 and 2019 TARS reports to seek further reimbursement from OPSEU. As well, we are catching up on reimbursement from a fund that has been set up by OPSEU to defray the cost of booking off local presidents for union business. This reimbursement will contribute significantly to Local 560's resources.

The Local took on a number of grievances this year, including complaints related to Partial-load professors who were not assigned workloads in compliance with Article 26.10 of our Collective Agreement (C/A) and who were not assigned Full-workloads of 12 Teaching Contact Hours (TCH). Province-wide, we have seen some significant success, including cash settlements for Partial-load faculty.

We will continue to litigate the following three long-term grievances covering the following matters:

- 1) The College has breached two Minutes of Settlement (MOS) and the union is requesting \$1.6 Million in damages based on figures that have been provided by the College itself.
- 2) The elimination of 170 Partial-load positions.
- 3) The sessional conversion of approximately 12 English Language Institute positions.

Local 560's Workload Monitoring Group (WMG) Chair, Keith Opatowski, finished a series of WMG Road Shows at the four main campuses to advise full-time professors of their Article 11 rights as they pertain to workload assignments on your Standard Workload Form (SWF). If you have questions about your full-time workload assignment or SWF, contact: [wmg@opseu560.org](mailto:wmg@opseu560.org).

Local 560 will continue to be accessible and responsive to the issues important to the membership. Such issues include: freedom from discrimination/harassment/bullying, academic freedom, downloading of managerial responsibilities to program coordinators and support staff, and Partial-load Registry matters.

As President, I will be seeking approximately 300 additional Full-time positions across Seneca College. Additionally, in the new year we will host a Lunch and Lecture Series to inform Full-Time and Partial-Load faculty of their rights under the C/A. Local 560's stewards have noted increases in class size, in some cases class sizes that have doubled. If your class increases above 35, tell your Steward to raise at WMG, or contact [wmg@opseu560.org](mailto:wmg@opseu560.org). We can advocate for you.

The OPSEU Local 560 Office wishes you a peaceful and restorative holiday. We also recognize that this is a difficult time of year for some. If you know someone who is alone for the holidays or finds this time of year challenging, reach out to them.

I am wishing you and yours a peaceful break and best wishes in the New Year.

Best regards and in solidarity,

Frank Yee  
President  
OPSEU LOCAL 560

### **Sick day policy**

In addition to Article 17 of our C/A, which covers the Short-Term Disability Plan, Seneca College has an Attendance/Absenteeism/Accommodation Policy. Illness and injury are often unpredictable, and sometimes necessitate absence from work. In cases when you are unable to perform work duties due to illness or injury, be mindful of notifying your manager.

We wish to draw your particular attention to Section 7 of Seneca's Attendance/Absenteeism/Accommodation Policy: "However, where absenteeism results from illness or other conditions beyond the employee's control, disciplinary action is not an appropriate response..."

If you have been disciplined for missing work due to illness or injury, please contact us at: (416) 495-1599.

### **Accommodations Update**

The following article demonstrates the importance of ergonomic evaluation and assistance, as well as a healthy and safe working environment.

For Academic Employees, there is an initiative of adjustable podiums currently being installed to replace the older, stationary models.

For an ergonomic assessment contact [Jordan.Holt@senecacollege.ca](mailto:Jordan.Holt@senecacollege.ca) .

### **Please make sure that you sign a union card!**

When you sign a union card, you are ensuring that your local receives the resources it needs from OPSEU central in order to serve your needs. It also ensures that you have more direct access to the services that OPSEU central offers, such as advocacy and advice regarding your benefits and pension, legal advice and support with grievances, among many others. Even though you are a member of the academic bargaining unit, you are not a union member until you sign your membership card.

Our union is made up of members who have become involved, so join today!

When your steward comes by to say hello, please let them know that you want to sign a card. Alternately, you can complete this digital form and email the completed form to [union@opseu560.org](mailto:union@opseu560.org) .

### **Timeline of bargaining**

As we head into 2020, we, the College Academic division of OPSEU, is once again preparing to head into bargaining.

In 2017, thanks to the strong mobilization of our sector, we went on strike to defend our rights at work. We made significant gains from that strike. While, as we well know, the Ford government removed the Province-wide Taskforce that was to look in part at hiring complement, we won job security rights for Partial-Load faculty and academic freedom. These two wins have granted Partial-Load faculty a significant measure of protection and recognition of their hard work, and granted us all the ability to engage in intellectual inquiry without fear of reprisal.

Our collective agreement is due to expire in September 2021. This means that we need to begin preparing now. In Spring of 2020, delegates from our Local will join delegates from the other 23 Locals at a meeting to elect our divisional leadership and a bargaining team. In Fall of 2020, we will meet again, this time with your bargaining demands in hand, as we establish the bargaining priorities for our division. To participate in this process, ensure that you have signed up as a union member. After we have informed our bargaining team of what we want from this round of bargaining, in June of 2021 they will begin to bargain with the College Employer Council.

We, College Academic Division, are unique in OPSEU because we have advisory councils set up that supports the bargaining team. Based on the model that the Chicago teacher's union employed so successfully, our divisional leadership set up council's last round of bargaining, made up of both contract and Full-Time professors, instructors, counsellors, and librarians, to advise the bargaining team as each

issue was raised at the table. This system ensures that our team is not isolated and is kept informed of our members' needs. It ensures that we are well represented at that table. Once again, we will have advisory councils made up of members who represent all the varied work we do and the conditions under which we work.

### **OPSEU Central updates**

Last May, Anna Ainsworth, our local Vice President, was elected to represent the GTA on OPSEU's Executive Board. Along with Edie Strachan (Regional Vice President) and Kingsley Kwok, she now works to ensure that the needs of the 55,000 workers and 101 locals in OPSEU Region 5 are heard at the Board. If you are interested in hearing more of what is happening in Region 5, which represents the Greater Toronto Area, please send an email to [annaopseuregion5@gmail.com](mailto:annaopseuregion5@gmail.com) requesting to be added to the regional listserv.

Importantly, OSPEU central is engaging in a census of its membership to better understand who its members are and what their needs are. Please take 15 minutes to complete the survey at: <https://opseu.org/census/>. It is crucial that the diversity of the members of our local is well represented.

### **Awards**

Every year, OPSEU Local 560 awards the Larry Olivo Award. Named for our former Chief Steward, it is awarded for outstanding service to Seneca College Faculty.

Recent recipients include:

Howard Doughty (Lifetime Achievement) – Awarded for Howard's longstanding commitment to union activism both locally and within OPSEU.

Howard Doughty, the longest serving College faculty member in the province, has recently been recognized for his contributions to the OPSEU newsletter, InSolidarity. At this month's biannual OPSEU editors' conference, Howard was celebrated for his many insightful articles, and for his contribution to the culture of our Union.

David Finlay (2017-18) – Awarded for significant contributions leading up to and during the five-week strike of 2017, especially with regard to overseeing strike pay for more than 1,000 striking faculty members.

Paul Matson (Lifetime Achievement) – Awarded for steadfast defense of faculty members' rights, particularly as Union Chair of Workload Monitoring Group.

Jon Olinski (2018-19) – Awarded for tireless work in improving transparency and responsiveness of Local 560's finances.

## Surveys – not again!

By Howard A. Doughty – Steward – King Campus

A while back, management used long-form questionnaires to probe faculty perceptions and opinions. We happily obliged because there was a lot to have opinions about. That practice ended a few years ago. Perhaps management got too much information.

Now, its surveys are more focussed. So, for example, there was one that asked about “internal communications” and, more recently, another about “innovation.” Maybe some officials were sincere in wanting our views, or maybe not. In any case, I’m pretty sure that anything we say will either be interpreted as an endorsement of college policy, or it will be quietly forgotten.

Scepticism aside, what are these surveys really all about?

If this were a college truly worthy of the name, such research would be “collegial.” Not just senior administration, but faculty and support staff would decide what issues to explore, what information to gather and analyze, how the resulting wisdom should be used.

That, plainly, isn’t what’s going on. Corporate surveys have some manifest functions (they do, after all, generate data that could be used in managerial decision making); but, the latent functions are usually more important. Firstly, they give the impression that management “cares” about what we think. Secondly, they detect possible areas of discontent, not so much to help fix a problem, but to identify and isolate dissenters. Thirdly, they demonstrate that management is in control. Asking for reactions is one way of demonstrating who’s the boss, and who’s empowered to take real action.

All this reminds me of a tremendous speech by Martin Nicolaus at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association in August, 1968 (copies of the original mimeograph are available on request). Martin explained to the crowd that sociological research was a weapon that the rich and powerful use to get “intelligence” on the poor and weak. Detailed surveys let the authorities know where their next problems are likely to arise.

Even little ones like Seneca now uses can alert officials to signs of trouble. It’s clear is that they’re taken for a hidden purpose.

If the college was actually interested in identifying and solving problems, it would enlist our aid in the entire process as colleagues, not laboratory subjects. When, however, the current premier cancelled the “Task Force” that was a crucial part of the settlement of the strike — and which temporarily suppressed hope for co-determination, shared administration, and managerial reform — he reinforced the adversarial relationship we have with management. Gestures like the Employee Survey ultimately do nothing, but to reinforce the top-down managerial model. That model must change.