

The Elephant in the Institution

A Bulletin from MUSSC to MUSF

February 7, 2019

Greetings to MacEwan University Sessional Faculty (MUSF) from the MacEwan University Sessional Steering Collaborative (MUSSC)!

To any MUSF who are new and want to know more about the history of MUSSC, please check out our website at mussc.ca, especially “The Elephant in the Institution” bulletins. Also, take a look at our Facebook page and Twitter feed, and see the blog post on MUSSC by Dr. Bob Barnetson, an Associate Professor at Athabasca University, for a good summary of some of MUSSC’s activities and accomplishments: <https://albertalabour.blogspot.com/search?q=MUSSC>

Consider, too, sending in your MacEwan email address to MUSSC member Shannon Robertson if you are only hearing about this MUSSC bulletin second-hand from other MUSF and want to be added to the mailing list (robertsons7@macewan.ca). Thank you!

Faculty Association Negotiating Committee (FANC)

It’s been a while since the last “Elephant” bulletin, but MUSSC does want to remind MUSF that the Faculty Association Negotiation Committee (FANC) is hard at work. On December 11, the membership met to discuss the results of the surveys conducted earlier in the term, and the slate of bargaining proposals developed based on the survey results. That slate of bargaining proposals was ratified by electronic vote, and since then FANC has been meeting biweekly to work through the priorities, and to develop the positions and language that will ultimately be formally presented during the bargaining round. In the course of this work, FANC is taking opportunities to supplement the expertise and experience of the committee through consultation with the membership. FANC is committed to the work of representing the interests of all FA members, and bargaining energetically on their behalf. In case you’d like more information about the members of our bargaining team, bios are available on the Faculty Association website: <https://www.macewanfa.ca>

Two Important Reports on the Status of Contract Faculty in Canada

The national report on precarious contract faculty from the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) was released last fall. It is a groundbreaking report which acquired access through FOIP applications to figures previously hidden by universities. These figures strongly counter some of conventional narratives, arguments, and myths about precarious contract faculty. Please check out the link: https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/contract-u?fbclid=IwAR3gioLxYSexarYJbhpR-sXCImUAWsJpxfebelKmOU04gDFz-Y-TR7_k5Gk

Of special interest to MUSF are the figures released by MacEwan University to the researchers via FOIP. They indicate that MacEwan is among the 13 universities in Canada with 2/3 or more precarious contract faculty, at 67.4% in 2016-17. See Table 1 on Page 23 of the report accessible through the link provided above. Clearly, then, the labour/expertise of MUSF is integral to MacEwan University and worthy of recognition and just treatment.

The CUPE Report neatly complements the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) Report released last fall: https://www.caut.ca/sites/default/files/cas_report.pdf

Feature-Length Documentary *In Search of Professor Precarious*

Film-maker Gerry Potter is working on a feature-length documentary film titled *In Search of Professor Precarious* on the subject of precarious contract faculty in Canadian higher education. He has compiled over one hundred interviews of Sessional Faculty in five different provinces, as well as conducted interviews with activists in other countries. In addition to clips from these interviews, the film will include footage of classes being taught, meetings encouraging fuller participation by Sessional Faculty in their unions and associations, artists making art in relation to the issue of precarious employment at post-secondary institutions, and rallies and strikes. This documentary, without question, will contribute to the pursuit of greater justice for Sessional Faculty in Canada. Stay tuned!