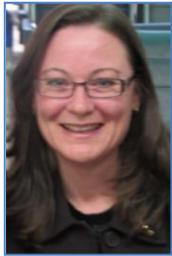


# The Instructor

Newsletter for part-time instructors at Dalhousie, SMU and MSVU, Dalhousie TAs, and SMU TESL instructors

**CUPE** / Canadian Union  
of Public Employees **Local 3912** **Winter/Spring 2012**

## President's Report by Jennifer Dimoff



With the state of labour relations recently, both nationally and regionally, there is no better time than now to become actively involved in your local. We have 1500 members and we need as many people as we can get to become involved. Whether you only have a couple of hours to spare or want to be involved on a more dedicated level, we have something for everyone. With our three collective agreements up for renewal at the end of August, now is the perfect time to become involved, and we'd like to hear from you. Are there issues that you feel strongly about and believe should be addressed through the bargaining process? If so, please contact the VP at your university or myself. If you have any other concerns or questions, our executive is always available to help.

**Our Annual General Meeting will take place on Thursday, April 12<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 pm at SMU.** Our AGM is being held at SMU this year in honour of our new TESL members at SMU. We will be holding elections and this is a great time for you to come out and see what is going on in our local, voice any concerns, and run for a position.

CUPENS is holding their annual convention in Yarmouth April 22-25. We still have seats available and would love to have good representation. If you might be interested in

participating in this please contact me. Travel and accommodations are covered.

You should also keep in mind that CUPE offers many educational courses in order to better understand how the union works and so that we can become better stewards. Many of these courses are on weekends and don't take up too much of your time but they will provide valuable information and experience for our members. If you have any questions about this or are interested in taking a course please contact me or your relevant VP.

CUPE, as a national union, is deeply committed to workers in the public sector but there is much more to it than that. The following is taken from the CUPE National Constitution:

The union's objectives are:

- The organization of workers generally, and in particular all workers in the public service of Canada.
- The advancement of the social, economic and general welfare of active and retired employees.
- The defense and extension of the civil rights and liberties of public employees and the preservation of free democratic trade unionism.
- The improvement of the wages, working conditions, hours of work, job security and other conditions affecting all employees including retirees' pension benefits.

- The promotion of efficiency in public service generally.
- The promotion of peace and freedom in the world, and the cooperation with free and democratic labour movements throughout the world.
- The utilization of our world's natural and human resources for the good of all the world's people while promoting the respect and conservation of the environment and the creation of sustainable communities and jobs.
- The elimination of harassment and discrimination of any sort or on any basis; for the equality of treatment regardless of class, race, colour, nationality, age, sex/gender, language, sexual orientation, place of origin, ancestry, religious beliefs, or mental and physical disability; and the active opposition to discrimination of same wherever it occurs or appears.
- The establishment of strong working relationships with the public we serve and the communities in which we work and live.

CUPE pursues its objectives by doing the following:

- Establishing cooperative relations between employers and employees.
- Promoting required desirable legislation.

## CUPE Youth at Convention

CUPE held its first ever national youth camp during the convention in November. Children of delegates were given an opportunity to witness first-hand the process of decision-making in Canada's largest union. They learned about issues facing workers, and made links with issues facing young people at school and in the community. As part of the program, participants produced a video detailing their experiences. It was presented

- Conducting an educational program designed to enlighten the general public with respect to the problems of public employees.
- Organizing and supporting central and provincial bodies of public employees for dealing with matters peculiar to a particular area or province and for assisting in the organizational efforts of this Union.
- Cooperating with the [Canadian Labour Congress](#), its chartered federations and labour councils, its affiliates and its departments in furthering the general well-being of the whole labour movement.
- Cooperating with the [Public Services International](#) and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions in their work.

Our strength and solidarity is found in our numbers. Every single voice is important. I look forward to hearing your questions and concerns and I hope some of you will join us in the work that we do.

In solidarity,

**Jennifer Dimoff**

President, CUPE 3912  
jdimoff@members.cupe.ca

to all delegates on the last day of convention, and can be viewed at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nwuMpnklzyg>



## SMU TESL Instructors Join CUPE 3912



In the Spring of 2011, the members of CUPE Local 4406 voted to dissolve their local and join CUPE Local 3912. The former local 4406 was formed in 2002 by the instructors at the TESL Center at Saint Mary's, and currently has approximately 40 members. From its inception, Local 4406 has made a number of outstanding improvements to the wages, job security, and working conditions of the TESL center instructional staff. Now, the members are very much looking forward to continuing this work by participating in Local 3912. The new group—renamed CUPE 3912

SMU/TESL—is currently in the midst of bargaining for its 4<sup>th</sup> collective agreement. As the first VP of CUPE 3912 SMU-TESL, I would like to thank all of the previous executive members of Local 4406 for their efforts in promoting solidarity and equity at Saint Mary's TESL Center. I would also like to acknowledge and thank Brother Peter Baxter for his leadership and advice in making this change. Along with all of the members of 3912 SMU/TESL, I would also like to thank the members and executive of Local 3912 for the warm and supportive reception we have received.

**Dr. Rory Leitch**

SMU Dept. of Education, SMU/TESL

## SMU's New Academic Plan: Points of Interest for CUPE 3912

Saint Mary's is undergoing change. Some of this change is already decided. For example, there will be a pan-faculty school of the environment at SMU. But there is also a process that is currently underway and that has been discussed in town halls recently. I attended a town hall on January 24, 2012 and found that there are several reasons why CUPE 3912 ought to pay attention to the new academic plan—and by 'we' I mean specifically the Arts faculty. The character of the Arts faculty will be influenced by the academic vision: possibly we retain the intention to cultivate intellectual curiosity, creativity, critical thinking and analytical skills. The apparent motivations for such town halls are to discuss liberal education: what is it? How can it be fostered? These questions

cannot be easily answered.

Since the O'Neill report, we've seen an ongoing competition for graduating cohorts from high schools around Nova Scotia, and around the country—in SMU's case, also internationally. There is, in fact, internationalization ongoing at SMU, although retention is an issue.

Our hackles might rise at the discussion of the importance of student learning—over

what profs do in classrooms, and excellence in teaching. There is much to consider about learning outcomes—which must in some way be related to student responsibility—being foisted upon profs, in their classrooms. Possibly, according to the report, a learning-outcomes based curriculum is on its way. One issue raised at



CUPE delegates march through Vancouver in support of the Occupy movement, at the CUPE National convention in November.

the town hall was how to define student success. The president of student life was enamored of this development, extra-curricular activities ought be recognized, she thinks. Secondly, we heard about the possibility of co-curricular transcripts, which are already on the website at Dalhousie and at MSVU. We can see this concern exists beyond the Saint Mary's community.

Another concern is the early detection of students who are at academic risk, and since profs are on the frontline, it is apparently up to us. Fair enough. It is easy to identify students at academic risk. Most of us have done so routinely each term, and speak to such students, offering help, advice, one on one interaction. Not very many students at risk (in my experience) take up this offer, and follow it through with success, principally because they fail to take the first step.

Another concern raised by a full-time faculty member had to do with hiring issues. When a department puts forward a recommendation about hiring, is the hiring committee to examine her work for its

interdisciplinarity? Does she teach in the preferred style? Linking theory and practice? How does she do this? In response to this query, we were reminded that there is a reasonably well-constructed process for hiring, and that departments define their needs. It would be rare if the department's intentions were overruled by a Dean or Senate.

One positive initiative has to do with the intention to implement more environmental sustainability at SMU.

But a serious issue is that this document is in the hands of Senate, and as one faculty member suggested, it "gives Senate teeth" – which they've not previously had. This is something we should watch.

For now, all CUPE members can view drafts of the revised Report on the FGSR website: [http://fgsr.smu.ca/research\\_policies.html](http://fgsr.smu.ca/research_policies.html) .

**Carmel Forde**

VP Dalhousie contract faculty

## What you need to know about Social Media and the Universities



Technological advancements continually create new teaching opportunities, and new social media is no exception, whether it is an app to help students connect with Shakespeare, as CUPE member David Wilson at SMU has developed, or merely using the course management systems at the various universities (Blackboard or Moodle). Yet this burgeoning technological frontier is not a free-for-all in which anything goes. As employees of academic institutions, CUPE members are bound by the rules and guidelines set forth by Senate.

Failure to follow the guidelines established by the universities can have seri-

ous consequences for CUPE 3912 members. A case in point is an ongoing grievance at St. Mary's University. The member in this case was denied reappointment (i.e. not rehired) in large part because of the department objecting to the member's use of Facebook. The university contends that the member continued to use Facebook even after the department had clearly ordered the member to stop. The union filed the grievance on the basis that the member did, in fact, stop using Facebook when ordered to do so, and therefore the decision not to rehire was a violation of the Collective Agreement. It should also be noted that the university maintains that the use of Facebook was not the sole reason for not rehiring the member and other factors combined with

the Facebook issue affected the university's decision. Separate grievances concerning these other factors have been filed on behalf of the member.

What is significant for CUPE 3912 members to note is that the use of social media, in this case Facebook, was a contributing factor in the denial of reappointment. Something that seems a convenient and ubiquitous tool can be a mitigating factor in the university's decision not to reappoint a member. While any decision of that nature is grievable, CUPE 3912 members who may want to avoid any potential problems with their use of social media should make sure what each university's guidelines concerning social media are. Below is a quick guide to each university's established guidelines.

**SMU:** As a result of the above grievance, the Saint Mary's Web Steering Committee formulated a policy concerning Social Media and Personal Privacy which was approved in May of 2011 (on-line at <http://www.smu.ca/media/documents/SocialMediaandPersonalPrivacy.pdf>). Further guidelines are also found at <http://www.smu.ca/policy/documents/5-1005SocialMediaGuidelines.pdf> and at <http://www.smu.ca/policy/documents/5-1004SocialMediaProtectionofUniversityIdentity.pdf>. This three-page document sets out the university's guidelines about the use of social media and is something that anyone who teaches at SMU should read. The primary concern in the document is to protect the privacy of the students, any breach of which can have serious consequences for the university as well as the member. The policy stresses two main points: First, disclosing personal information of anyone at the

university (whether faculty, student or staff) is prohibited unless it directly relates to (and is necessary for) a university program or activity. Second, students who do not participate in a course's social media component cannot be penalized or suffer negative consequences for opting out, and "course credit must not be conditional upon the student's participation in or use of social media."

**Dalhousie:** The Dalhousie Web Team has also created guidelines for the use of social media at Dal (found on-line at

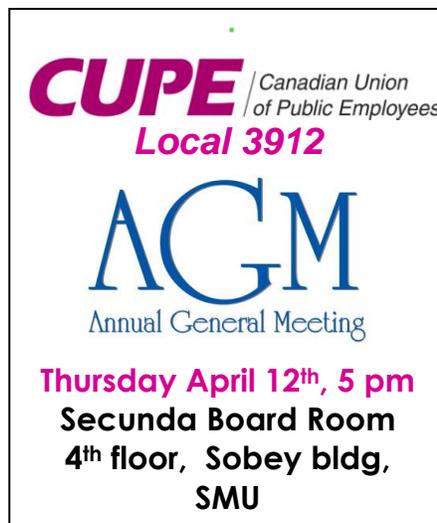
[http://www.dal.ca/webteam/web\\_policies/social\\_media.html](http://www.dal.ca/webteam/web_policies/social_media.html)), dated November and December 2010. The focus of these guidelines concerns integrating the use of social media with the overall marketing strategies of the university. Dalhousie's policy states that social media creates a stronger relationship with the university and can provide feedback for the university. The university stresses that, despite the benefits of social media, only authorized staff can speak on behalf of Dalhousie University

and that the university monitors its on-line reputation. Further, the guidelines urge transparency and request that anyone disclose their connection to Dalhousie immediately, as it may harm the university's reputation if the connection is revealed at a later date.

**Mount St. Vincent:** At present, MSVU does not appear to have any guidelines concerning social media. *The Instructor* will publish an update should this change.

Read the guidelines! Knowing them could save you a lot of hassle in the future.

**Steve Cloutier**  
VP Saint Mary's



## Environmental Health and Safety Committee – Dalhousie

Each month a large committee comprised of representatives from different campuses, from facilities management, athletics and recreation, engineering, housing, process engineering, and all employee groups meet under the direction of Ray Ilson to consider the health and safety issues that have arisen in the previous month. Accident summaries are reviewed, and the director updates the committee on, for example: environmental assessments of buildings, smoking policy, workshop safety, coding of labs, crisis management, field work safety, autoclaves, and

labour regulations. The merging of the agricultural college with Dalhousie is likely to bring new categories of safety to oversee.

If you have any safety concerns from within our unit, and are unsure about your contact, please e-mail me and I'll get back to you.

**Carmel Forde**

cforde@dal.ca

EHS committee, Dalhousie

VP Dalhousie



## Reminders:

- Check our website [www.3912.cupe.ca](http://www.3912.cupe.ca) for important information and to contact your campus VP or president.
- Come to the **Annual General Meeting** at 5:00 pm on Thurs. April 12<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> floor, Sobeys building at SMU to hear what your executive has been up to and elect your representatives for 2012-13. Food and beverages provided. All welcome!

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