

# MUFA Newsletter

October/November 2009 — Volume 36.2 — Alexandre Sévigny, Editor

## University Appoints New President

On October 14 and October 15, 2009, the Senate and Board of Governors, respectively, approved the appointment of Patrick Deane as the new President of McMaster University, beginning July 2010. Deane has an exemplary academic record and brings to the position extensive administrative experience at a number of Canada's top universities. In its report, the Search Committee (which included three past MUFA presidents) stressed the need to find an individual who would, among other things, preserve McMaster's history of collegiality; address pressing budgetary needs; champion initiatives that support faculty recruitment and foster scholarship, and demonstrate a commitment to building relationships across the constituencies of the University community (extracts from Report of the Committee to Recommend a President, October 7, 2009, available on the Daily News website).



Your MUFA Executive extends a warm welcome to the new President and looks forward to helping him to build those relationships.

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# Administration Requests Increased Pension Contributions

*The three-year term of the agreement facilitates planning by the University but also ensures a degree of income predictability for faculty and librarians during what may be a period of economic uncertainty.*

**Joint Committee Agreement, March 14, 2008**

President Peter George has written to the Association asking that members agree to increased pension contributions similar to those imposed earlier on The Management Group (TMG) and to those negotiated with CAW staff in late September. The letter from President George is posted on the Association's web site at [this link](#). The request comes in the middle of a three-year contract and would require approval by a vote of the membership in order to be implemented. The President states that "Such a move will strengthen the position of the pension plan and align MUFA pension payments with those of the largest salaried staff groups on our campus. It will also facilitate discussions with the Minister of Finance ... and will help the university's operating budget by providing a measure of increased fiscal flexibility...."

MUFA members presently contribute 5% for earnings up to YMPE (Year's Maximum Pensionable Earnings) and 6.5% above YMPE. (This year's YMPE is \$46,430. Pension contributions only apply to salary below the Income Tax Act max which is presently \$136,112. Both figures are adjusted annually.) The request is to increase the rate to 5.5% up to YMPE and 7.25% above YMPE for calendar 2010, and then to further increase contributions to 6% up to YMPE and 8% above YMPE beginning on January 1, 2011. Any further changes to pension contributions would be the subject of negotiations for the next contract that would come into force on July 1, 2011. The cost of these increases to a member earning \$110,000 in 2009/10 (assuming a merit pay increase of one CP/M par unit for 2010/11) would total \$1,484 for the 18 month period. The costs for higher or lower salaries are roughly proportional. (See the President's letter for more examples.) Pension contributions are made in before-tax dollars, so the net effect on take-home pay is reduced by your marginal tax rate. The total value to the University of

these extra payments over the 18-month period leading up to our next contract would be about \$1.4M.

We have argued before in this *Newsletter* that it is right for our members to shoulder a fair share of the burden imposed by the financial crisis. Most of us have relatively secure positions, and we will be receiving pay increases, starting in July 2010, which are based on the situation before the start of the financial meltdown. The goodwill implied by considering the President's request would not be directed toward the President or the Administration but to our fellow McMaster employees.

Right now it appears that the impact of the financial crisis on the University will be less than was feared. Markets are recovering; the Canadian economy has demonstrated a satisfying level of strength; and higher education remains a priority of the Ontario government. On the other hand, the size of the request for increased pension contributions is also relatively modest compared to measures that were being contemplated only a few months ago. Furthermore, the financial disruption has still not run its course, and, even before the crisis, the University was sitting on a worrisome pension deficit which remains to be addressed.

The MUFA Executive has been discussing this request and soliciting input from the membership. One thing which is clear is that members place a high value on having a defined benefit pension plan and are concerned about maintaining its financial health. In this regard "... [the] Administration's desire to close the defined benefit pension plan for new members of MUFA ..." is unwelcome. The letter from the President notes that "... this issue will be a significant aspect of negotiations next year for the MUFA contract that will commence in July of 2011."

There are also concerns about providing “increased fiscal flexibility” to an Administration whose priorities include the Burlington Project, a swimming pool for the Pan Am Games and a new satellite campus for McMaster in China. Members would prefer to know that any extra contributions would be incremental to what is already budgeted for the pension. It is a widely held view that the President’s proposal is one-sided and that any actual agreement should incorporate conditions and terms proposed by MUFA.

Another concern relates to the precedent of changing the contract with the University in mid-course. Several members have suggested that, if

the contract with MUFA is to be reopened, then other contracts, particularly the President’s, should also be put on the table. They feel (and I share this feeling) that the 14 post-retirement payments to the President of \$99,999 per year for Administrative leaves not taken should be reconsidered.

What comes next? We will continue to solicit input from our members and to discuss the request with the Administration. If and when the Executive feels that a proposal, based on these discussions and on input from members, is ready for consideration by the membership, then it will be put forward for a vote.

*John Berlinsky*

## MUFAGabbing

A vote was conducted in October on whether or not to split g-mufagab into two lists, one for McMaster issues and the second for "other" matters. 206 votes were returned:

YES - 185  
NO - 16  
NEITHER - 5

As a result, two lists have been created to replace g-mufagab.

[mufagabmac-l@mcmaster.ca](mailto:mufagabmac-l@mcmaster.ca)  
for McMaster issues

[mufagabother-l@mcmaster.ca](mailto:mufagabother-l@mcmaster.ca)  
for all other topics

Everyone who was currently on the g-mufagab list, was automatically subscribed to the two new lists. However, if you would prefer to unsubscribe to one or both of the new lists, please contact the MUFA

Office ([mufa@mcmaster.ca](mailto:mufa@mcmaster.ca)) and make your preference known.

For those who were not sub-scribed to g-mufagab, but would like to be subscribed to one or both of the new lists, please send an e-mail to the MUFA Office ([mufa@mcmaster.ca](mailto:mufa@mcmaster.ca))

The g-mufagab list has been shut down so we urge you to use one or other of the new lists, as appropriate, to discuss issues of interest.

In his message to members, MUFA President, John Berlinsky, said, “It is to be hoped that discussion will be civil and respectful on both lists. However mufagabmac-l has been singled out as an important channel for public discussion of MUFA-related issues at a pivotal time in the University’s history. We would like to grow this list to include a much larger number of faculty and librarians. Please use both these lists wisely and with consideration for other subscribers.”

# Project Status Report

(as of November 18, 2009)

Project Name	Estimated Completion Date	Approved or Anticipated Budget	Status
<b>Project &amp; Budget Approved</b>			
Engineering Technology Building	Summer 2009	\$48,000,000 — \$38,000,000 (pre BTech Prog) — \$8,600,000 (orig project scope - Dec 2005)	Building is substantially complete. Minor deficiency work remaining. Landscaping complete.
McMaster Front Entrance Improvements - Phase 2	Pending	\$4,900,000	Preliminary design work complete. First stage of landscaping to be implemented following the completion of the Engineering building.
MUMC Biosafety Lab 3 (FHS)	Pending	\$2,500,000	Working drawings are 90% complete.
MUMC Farncombe Family Digestive Health Research Institute	Summer 2009	\$3,675,000	Temporary hoarding has been set up. Shop drawing work continuing. Contract for various trades are being organized. Tendering approximately 95% complete.
MUMC Surgical Skills Facility	Summer 2009	\$3,150,000	Project complete. Minor deficiency work remains.
Ron Joyce Centre (Formerly Burlington Campus Centre for Advanced Management Studies [CAMSS])	Fall 2010	\$26,824,000	Site plan approval received. Structural steel is being erected and is 90% complete. Exterior glazing to commence end of November.
IWC Centre for Spinal Cord Injury Education, Research & Rehab and Centre for Cancer Education, Research & Rehabilitation	March 2011	\$20,000,000	Approved funding through the Knowledge Infrastructure Program (May 2009). Renewal work on existing roof of IWC has commenced and emergency power improvements nearing completion. Design development stage of addition completed. Site Plan submitted to City of Hamilton. The floor plan has been signed off and the consultants have moved onto working drawing stage. Review of mechanical and electrical infrastructure in IWC underway.
Nuclear Reactor/NRB Renovations	March 2011	\$22,000,000	Approved funding through the Knowledge Infrastructure Program (May 2009). Schematic design phase complete. Borehole testing complete.

Other			
City of Hamilton Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Tank	Fall 2009	City of Hamilton Project	Construction approximately 75% complete. Project will extend into late Fall. Parking Services aware of situation.
McMaster Innovation Park CanMet Building		MIP Board approval to proceed with sourcing of financing & finalization of lease	Ellis-Don Construction Ltd. Has completed foundation work. Reinforced concrete at 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor level.
McMaster Innovation Park Life Sciences Building		\$45,000,000	Project concept now under development with FHS funding. Submitted as a project in the Knowledge Infrastructure Program (March 2009) — Approval not received (May 2009).
McMaster Innovation Park Red Brick Building Renovations		MIP Board Approved	Project completed.
For Future Consideration			
Wilson Building for Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences (Liberal Arts Building)		\$120,000,000	Long Term Capital Planning Submission to MTCU (Aug 2008). Development of a Functional Plan is on-going.
Above Ground Parking Structure			On hold pending campus wide parking review
New Pool			PanAm Games Bid – dependent upon a successful bid
Sports Arena			Offsite Location
Tennis Courts			

## Welcome New Members

**Sarah Gallagher** Rehabilitation Science  
**Andrew Mente** Medicine  
**Joseph Tan** Wayne C Fox Chair in Business Innovation

Many thanks to **Stéphanie Posthumus** (French) and **Philip Savage** (Communication Studies & Multimedia) who have agreed to represent their Departments on the MUFA Council and to **Krista Madsen Baker** (Kinesiology) who will represent MUFA on the Board of the McMaster Children's Centre.

### Passages

**Gerry King**, Chemistry, October 30, 2009  
**Mary Tremblay**, Rehabilitation Science, October 13, 2009  
**Margot Wilson**, Psychology, Neuroscience & Behaviour, September 24, 2009

This Newsletter is published monthly between September and May by the Faculty Association at McMaster University. The Association's Executive for 2009/10 is composed of the following members:

President	John Berlinsky
Vice-President	Virginia Aksan
Past-President	Richard Stubbs
Academic Affairs	Nancy Bouchier
Human Rights	Bonny Ibhawoh
Library	Rick Stapleton
Membership	Marek Niewczas
OCUFA Director	Richard Stubbs
Pension	Khalid Nainar
Public Relations	Alexandre Sévigny
Remuneration	Herb Schellhorn
Spec Enquiries & Grievances	Peter Sutherland
Tenure	Martin Dooley
Treasurer	Gladys Peachey
Without Portfolio	Michelle MacDonald

Executive Director: PhyllisDeRosa Koetting  
Administrative Assistant: Kelly McCaughey  
Returning Officer: Matheus Grasselli

Opinions expressed in this Newsletter are those of the authors and do not represent the views of the Association or of its Executive unless so specified. Anyone wishing to contribute to the MUFA Newsletter is invited to send submissions to the Faculty Association Office (HH-103A, e-mail: [mufa@mcmaster.ca](mailto:mufa@mcmaster.ca), ext. 24682). Deadlines are the 15th of each month. All submissions will be published at the discretion of the Editor.

Current and past issues of the MUFA Newsletter are posted on the MUFA website ([www.mcmaster.ca/mufa](http://www.mcmaster.ca/mufa)).

## What students would like their instructors to know:

**We make lists of all your weird-ass mannerisms....**

You start every sentence with "that said." You say "literally" when you mean "actually" or "I'm not exaggerating." You squeak "m'kay?" at every lull in your lecture, just to make sure that the crickets you hear and the tumbleweed you see blowing through this 300-seat hall is just your imagination. You stroke your chin whenever someone coughs. You're loud enough to wake the dead. You need to know that we make games out of these things. We count how many times you say "sort of" in 50 minutes (it was almost 200, by the way). We instigate a chorus of coughs to see if we can get you to rub that stubble off your chin. If we made a drinking game out of every time you wiped your glasses on your blazer, we'd all be three sheets to the wind by the time you fired up that pointless PowerPoint. And you need to know that these are the things that define you between students. "Oh, you're taking his class? Check out the way he makes every statement like it's a question. Hilarious." (*The Chronicle of Higher Education, Brainstorm, November 2009*)

# Mark Your Calendars

**MUFA General Meeting**  
**Thursday, December 10, 2009 — 2:00 pm**  
**Council Chambers (Gilmour Hall 111)**