



2019 – 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS





Brenda Austin-Smith, CAUT President

Introduction

The past year has been unlike any other. The COVID-19 pandemic rapidly and radically upended our universities and colleges and our work. Across the country, and around the world, campuses were deserted, teaching migrated to virtual platforms, and important research was put on hold.

The unfolding situation remains fluid, but one thing is clear: the COVID-19 pandemic has brought into sharp relief the long-forming fault lines within our universities and colleges. The increasing reliance of our institutions on private financing, the exploitation of precarious labour, and the turn toward market-oriented curriculum and research has left us ill prepared to deal with the current crisis.

Now is the time for us to begin reimagining universities and colleges in a post-pandemic world. After years of being cut, squeezed, trimmed, mismanaged and overburdened, the people who work in universities and colleges need to come together to define and advance a renewed vision for post-secondary education.

We need to look at replacing a broken system of private financing that condemns young people to a generation of debt, and willfully exploits international students. We need to fix a broken employment system that has privileged hiring cheap and precarious labour. And finally, we need to see the purpose of post-secondary education beyond that of simply being a service provider to industry and the privileged few, but as essential to the preservation, dissemination, and advance of knowledge for the benefit of all.



Brenda Austin-Smith
President



David Robinson
Executive Director

COVID-19

As the COVID-19 pandemic took hold in Canada in March 2020, CAUT quickly responded to support members and member associations to address the issues sparked by the public health crisis.

- CAUT pressed the federal government to include universities and colleges in emergency support measures and long-term recovery plans.
- Our legal and bargaining teams developed a template letter of understanding and assisted associations in negotiating agreements in light of workplace adjustments due to the pandemic.
- In partnership with the Canadian Federation of Students, CAUT undertook a survey of students about the impact of the pandemic on their finances and return-to-school plans.
- A Frequently Asked Questions page on the CAUT website provided guidance and resources to member associations on the most common issues and questions arising from changes in academic work brought about by the pandemic.
- A "COVID-19 and the Academic Job" virtual town hall series engaged members in discussions on governance, contract academic staff, intellectual property, remote teaching, systemic racism and anti-union legislation.
- Guidelines on Re-opening Campuses were developed to assist academic staff associations in addressing logistical and other questions about fall campus operations.
- A series of webinars and guiding principles were produced to assist associations when confronting administrations' claims of financial distress and exigency.
- CAUT published a special issue of the Bulletin with articles and commentary on COVID-19's short and long-term impacts on post-secondary education.
- We surveyed 4,300 members about the impact of COVID-19 on their working lives, finding that workload has increased, research has suffered and stress levels have risen.



Yalla Sangaré, Association des professeurs, professeures et bibliothécaires de l'Université Sainte-Anne
Jules J.S. De Tibeiro, Association des professeures et professeurs de l'Université de Moncton, Campus de Shippagan



Rachel Milner, Association of Academic Staff University of Alberta
Marc Schroeder, Mount Royal Faculty Association

Academic freedom and collegial governance

Since its founding in 1951, CAUT has been an outspoken defender of our members' academic freedom, the foundational value of the profession. Academic freedom grants academic staff the right to teach, research, publish, and freely express opinions about their institution or society at large without censorship or sanction.

Major initiatives and cases involving academic freedom and collegial governance issues in 2019-20:

- A committee of investigation established by CAUT found that Thompson Rivers University (TRU) breached a professor's academic freedom, and that the University suffers from a "broad institutional weakness when it comes to understanding academic freedom."
- Acting as co-counsel, CAUT legal staff helped negotiate a consent award in the case of Dr. Michael Persinger at Laurentian University. The award found that the University did not adequately consider Persinger's academic freedom when it improperly removed him from teaching a class in which he explored controversial topics.

Research

The CAUT national office works to defend the integrity of academic work, improve working conditions, and ensure an affordable, accessible, and high-quality public education system through research, education and advocacy.

Our core activities include undertaking extensive research, and publishing timely reports and analyses.

In 2019-20, CAUT:

- Developed a manual and templates and held training sessions for associations on Costing Bargaining proposals.
- Maintained an up-to-date online searchable database of CAUT member collective agreements across Canada.
- Tracked salaries, stipends, and benefits for regular, contract and librarian academic staff.
- Provided members with annual and longitudinal data on institutional revenues and expenditures.
- Published the CAUT Almanac of Post-Secondary Education, a comprehensive data set covering various aspects of the post-secondary education system.
- Undertook public opinion research in advance of the election about the importance of post-secondary education and conducted a poll of students on the impact of COVID-19 on their plans to pursue their studies in the fall of 2020.
- Fielded a triannual survey on librarian salaries.
- Reinstigated a quarterly online Legal Update publication in which significant cases in or affecting the post-secondary sector are summarized and analyzed.



Kristin Cavoukian, University of Toronto CUPE 3902



Anna Beukes, Alberta Colleges and Institutes Faculties Association
Sean Parkinson, Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of BC

Political action

- Following last fall's federal election, CAUT released its vision for the new government – outlining the need to strengthen post-secondary education, building on its 2020 federal budget submission.
- CAUT coordinated meetings between association leaders and their MPs as part of a week of national advocacy.
- We denounced plans for performance-based funding for universities and colleges, issuing an Education Review and dedicating a Bulletin to raising awareness of the issue.
- In 2019, CAUT's Fair Employment Week campaign took place during the federal election, with events across the country calling for fairness for contract academic staff.

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Equity and social justice

- Over 150 delegates participated in our two-day conference on *Organizing for Equity*, sharpening skills to take deeper action on campus.
- CAUT issued an advisory on *Bargaining for Indigenization of the Academy*.
- We joined the Climate Action Network, a national coalition advocating for greater federal action on climate change.
- Through its involvement in the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group, CAUT advocated for changes to the *National Security Act*, and for justice for Hassan Diab, a Canadian professor who was wrongly extradited to France.
- As a member of Childcare Now, CAUT supports an affordable child care system in Canada, a need made more evident through the COVID-19 crisis.



Rohini Bannerjee, Saint Mary's University Faculty Union



Janne Glerup, Dansk Magisterforening

Member education

CAUT continued to expand its education offerings by developing more peer-based training, with expert volunteers from our membership helping to deliver workshops.

Seventeen on-site workshops were presented prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, covering collective bargaining, grievance handling, equity, communications, membership engagement, and intellectual property.

In addition, CAUT held an Advocacy 2020 workshop which focused on building campaigns and communications skills.

The CAUT Librarians' and Archivists' Conference investigated the politics of library reorganization initiatives, and plotted strategies to push back against the deskilling and devaluation of work.

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Collective bargaining

Securing contract gains that protect and advance employment conditions and professional rights remains a core priority for CAUT.

In 2019-20, many academic staff associations were forced to negotiate under various government-imposed mandates and funding cuts. In British Columbia, the Public Sector Employers' Council set a 2 per cent per year mandate. In Alberta, the newly elected United Conservative Party announced deep cuts of more than 5 per cent on average to the province's universities and colleges. In Manitoba and Ontario, wage restraint legislation was introduced.

Despite these challenges, associations continued to make important advances:

- The Association of Academic Staff: University of Alberta negotiated key equity gains, including a remedy for gender-based salary inequities and stronger conversion language for contract academic staff.
- The Brandon University Faculty Association secured stronger job security and right of first refusal protections for contract staff.
- The University of Saskatchewan Faculty Association reached a deal that saw improvements to benefits and a commitment to diversity in collegial committees.
- The St. Francis-Xavier Association of University Teachers negotiated a memorandum of understanding on a gender pay equity audit.
- The University of Victoria Faculty Association won significant improvements to the salary structure and negotiated an Indigenous Hires Fund to create full-time, tenure-track faculty positions for Indigenous scholars, with preference going to University of Victoria graduates.



Ted Montgomery, Speaker of Council



Carlos Humberto Zambrano Escamilla and family

International solidarity

CAUT works actively in solidarity with academic unions and associations around the world to defend professional and human rights, and to build capacity.

- CAUT stood up to support academics and teachers facing persecution in Hong Kong, Colombia, and Pakistan.
- CAUT provided financial support to the University Teachers Association of Ghana for their annual membership conference.
- CAUT also assisted and participated in a two-day meeting of academic staff associations in Zimbabwe with the aim of creating a national federation.
- At the Education International World Congress that brought together unions representing more than 32 million teachers and education workers globally, CAUT won unanimous support for a motion calling for support of, and advocacy for, academic freedom.

Photo credits

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**THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF
UNIVERSITY TEACHERS IS THE NATIONAL VOICE
FOR ACADEMIC STAFF REPRESENTING 72,000
TEACHERS, LIBRARIANS, RESEARCHERS, GENERAL STAFF
AND OTHER ACADEMIC PROFESSIONALS AT
SOME 125 UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES
ACROSS CANADA.**



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