CALLING ON VOLUNTEERS FOR THE UPCOMING STRAWBERRY SOCIAL
QUSA NEEDS YOUR HELP!

With June approaching, plans are underway for the annual QUSA June Strawberry Social to be held on Thursday, June 24. Volunteers are required for ticket sales, hulling strawberries and serving and scooping ice cream. In order to make this event successful, please contact the QUSA Office to let us know how you might help.
President’s Report

The first quarter of 2010 has been a busy period for QUSA! There are several people to thank including all those who serve on the various committees and so quietly ensure that the voice of staff is heard across campus. At this time a special thanks is due to Sarah Pugh, our most recent Business Administrator who has left QUSA to pursue other avenues. To assist with the transition between Sarah and our new Administrator Myrna Horton (whom we are delighted to have with us), Betty Pollard kindly agreed to come out of retirement and help keep the office going and the Executive on the straight and narrow. Thank you to Sarah, Betty and now Myrna for being the backbone of QUSA and keeping us all on track!

Along with our staffing transitions, we have been busy hosting the recent Town Hall meeting which gave staff an opportunity to express their thoughts around the question of unionization. We hope that you found that discussion to be worthwhile and informative. It was certainly timely – being held only a few days before staff voted on unionization. After many long months, United Steelworkers petitioned for unionization and a vote was held on March 31st. The most important piece of this event was the high voter turnout, and I was pleased to see such participation. It is important that whatever the outcome it will be because a large majority of staff were engaged in the process and made a decision. That decision is still yet to be determined.

Steelworkers and Queen’s will have a meeting with the Ontario Labour Relations Board on April 21st to start discussing different positions on the scope of the bargaining unit and who is eligible for membership. If there is no agreement at that meeting, the discussion will continue at subsequent meetings. Once there is agreement on the bargaining unit segregated ballots, which were not counted and which would represent eligible members of any agreed bargaining unit, will then be counted.

So with much yet to be decided with regards to the union question QUSA will continue to represent you in all matters relating to staff.

What does that mean? Human Resources has advised us that to adhere to Ontario Labour Board Policies, we are not able to continue to engage in any policy changing discussions so the Job Evaluation System project is on hold, the discussions we had been having regarding an improved Dispute Resolution Policy are on hold, as are our Salary and Benefits discussions.

In closing, I would hope that staff do not become polarized over the issue of unionization but understand that we all have a desire for the same outcome – to ensure staff are supported in the work place, that we are treated as the professionals we are, and that our salary, benefits, job satisfaction and security continue.

Spring Forsberg
QUSA President

Unionization Update

As previously mentioned, the decision on unionization will not be finalized until the Ontario Labour Relations Board rules on the scope of the bargaining unit and who is eligible for union membership. For all unionization updates please visit the Queen’s HR staff unionization drive HR staff unionization drive or Staff Union - United Steel Workers websites.
New QUSA Business Administrator

QUSA is very pleased to introduce our new Business Administrator, Myrna Horton. Myrna has previously worked in the Office of Advancement for over 7 years and is now returning to Queen’s after an absence. The main reason that Myrna has maintained her interest and desire to rejoin the Queen’s community is Queen’s reputation as a university with outstanding teaching, staff and students and a strong sense of community and tradition. She brings to her new position a wealth of experience from working in office settings within large organizations as well as her past experience working for Queen’s. We know Myrna will be a real asset to the QUSA Office in its role representing its members and respecting the relationship between the Staff Association and the University. Myrna, welcome back to Queen’s and to the QUSA family!

Thank you

QUSA and the Courier team were very happy when Betty Pollard, past Business Administrator, came out of retirement to run the QUSA office until Myrna was hired. We are grateful for all the guidance you’ve given to Myrna to get her up to speed on QUSA business, and for your help with this Courier production. Thank you and enjoy the rest of your retirement

QUSA also wishes to extend our sincere thanks to our former Business Administrator, Sarah Pugh, who has recently left to pursue other opportunities. Sarah’s commitment and dedication to both the QUSA Executive and Members has been greatly appreciated. We wish her the very best in her future endeavours.

Welcome back

A special welcome back to our co-editors Sharon David and Barbara Quesnel. We are delighted to have them on board to bring you this and upcoming QUSA Couriers. We are also pleased to have our new Business Administrator, Myrna Horton taking on the Courier layout and production. This team will work together to ensure you receive an exciting and informative Courier.

General Meeting Report

The QUSA Executive would like to thank Dean MacLean for being our guest speaker at our Spring General Meeting. Dr. MacLean is the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science. Since the Faculty of Arts and Science is the largest faculty at Queen’s, his presentation regarding the future of that faculty and its planning document was very helpful for all in attendance.

Immediately after his presentation, staff were given an opportunity to ask questions. One question that was raised from the floor and answered by Dean MacLean left many in attendance feeling concerned regarding the direction the Faculty of Arts and Science may be taking. In particular, Dean MacLean stated that “…staff are a moveable item in the budget…”. This comment has stayed with many of us, so the QUSA Executive felt that further clarification was needed. Dean MacLean was contacted by email regarding this comment. He responded that this comment was not meant to imply that staff can easily be disposed of, but rather that staff can be more easily reassigned / shifted to other departments and /or roles on campus as opposed to the faculty, who cannot (i.e., if there is a high demand for courses in mathematics and a low demand for courses in French, you cannot simply move faculty who specialize in French into the Math Department).
QUASR

The implementation of the new finance administration system, Queen's University Administrative Systems Replacement has involved many changes and a number of challenges for staff at Queen's, increasing the need for support.

To help ensure that every issue is tracked and followed up in an organized way, a new “one-window” model of support was introduced March 29th. All support questions should be directed to the Financial Services Support Centre, either by calling (613) 533-6000 ext. 77900, Monday to Friday from 8:30am to 12:00 noon and 1:00 to 4:30 pm, or by filling out our online help form: [http://www.queensu.ca/its/apps/forms/finance/finance.php](http://www.queensu.ca/its/apps/forms/finance/finance.php).

So far we have received nearly 600 questions and requests and a high percentage have been cleared up.

Revisions to the communication plan are also underway to improve the frequency, distribution and content of project updates. One of those initiatives involves the creation of a Communications Advisory Panel to provide regular feedback on communications from a full range of campus perspectives. Planning is continuing to identify and meet ongoing training needs.

The QUASR Executive Steering Committee has also commissioned a series of “Lessons Learned” and “Health Check” focus groups and interviews to assist with the planning for upcoming implementation of the HR and Student modules.

Salary & Benefits Committee Update

The Salary & Benefits Committee thanks you for taking the time to complete the recent Member Survey which ended March 11, 2010. We received a tremendous response rate of 75% from the 644 eligible QUSA members. This information will be valuable in determining areas of focus for future salary and benefits discussions with HR.

In early February 2010, as per our QUSA By-Laws, Section 7 (d) v., official notice was delivered to Human Resources that our Committee would like to begin discussions regarding QUSA’s next Memorandum of Agreement. HR has indicated that until the results from the recent unionization vote are determined, we will be unable to plan any discussions regarding salary and benefits.

Thank you.

QUSA Salary & Benefits Committee:
Davin Carlson, Psychology
Pam Bandy-Dafoe, Chemistry
Carla Ferreira, Alumni Relations and Annual Giving
Melissa Gunton, Student Affairs
Teresa Pires, Southern African Research Centre
Stephanie Goffin-Boyd, Residences

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Caroline Davis
VP, Finance & Administration

Davin Carlson
QUSA Salary & Benefits Chair
Pension Committee Update

The Board of Trustees Pension Committee met on Friday, March 5, 2010. The following is a brief overview of some of the topics that were discussed.

Summary of the Queen’s Pension Plan Returns for the 2009 Calendar Year

- Returns came in at 2.7% in 4th quarter resulting in an overall return of 18.6%.
- In the BNY (Bank of New York) Mellon analysis of Canadian pension plans with assets of more than $1 billion, our pension plan was in the first quartile for the past three-month, one-year, and ten-year returns.

Summary of the Queen’s Pension Plan Returns for the Plan Year (Sep. 1st to Aug. 31st)

- January 2010 was a weak month for the markets but the pension fund’s net return for the first five months of the plan year was approximately 3.35%

Working Group on Pension Plan Amalgamation for Ontario Universities

Last fall, the press reported on a proposal that had been made by a few universities to amalgamate all of the Ontario university pension plans into one. This approach could alleviate some of the financial burden associated with the “unfunded liability” that many of the Ontario university plans are contending with. After much discussion and analysis of this proposal, it became evident that there are insurmountable issues – amalgamation into one plan is virtually impossible because of the differences in our individual plans and their governance.

The working group tasked with exploring possible solutions is now looking into the feasibility of combining pension plan assets under a new plan administrator, which may lower the overall fees for the administration of our plans. The plans themselves would still be managed individually by the respective universities. Whether this revised proposal is possible, and whether it will be of interest to Queen’s, is still to be determined.

*An unfunded liability occurs when the assets in a pension plan cannot meet the plan’s total obligations – the total obligations are the amount of money the plan must have in it to pay out every member (retirees and current plan holders) the amount they have contributed.

Peg Hauschildt
Board of Trustees
Pension Committee
Summary from the COUSA Conference
February 5-6, 2010

Pension Challenges at Ontario Universities
Hugh MacKenzie (retired United Steel Worker) declared that the universities in Ontario are using the economic crisis to attempt to revise the decades-old pattern of the universities making contributions at a higher level than employees. Excluding the period of contribution holidays, the universities traditionally contributed at a level of at least 1.5 to 2 times the level of the university employees. The university administrations are in the process of extracting higher contributions from the employees. This is being done with the full encouragement of the provincial government.

Mr. MacKenzie also blasted the federal government for its policy of limiting the contributions of universities into pension plans which are in surplus, saying that this policy prevented universities from building up rainy-day funds which would have seen them through the current crisis.

Mr. MacKenzie observed that the proposal of the Arthur commission for a multi-employer pension plan, in which all the defined benefit (and hybrid) plans at Ontario universities would be merged into something akin to OMERS or HOOP, is likely a good idea for unions to pursue. Such a plan would provide stability for the workers, enhance portability between institutions, and lessen competition between the institutions. This is an opportunity for unions to pursue and negotiate while university administrations are heavily lobbying for solvency relief. (For a review of the Ontario Expert Commission on Pension/Arthur Commission see http://www.pensionreview.on.ca/english/docs/)

COUSA Joins the Ontario University Coalition
COUSA delegates supported a proposal that COUSA join the new Ontario University Coalition. This coalition brings together a number of staff, faculty and student groups in Ontario universities to push together for higher and more stable funding for post-secondary education.

Hugh MacKenzie is a labour-side economic consultant who has worked for over 30 years in a variety of capacities related to public policy development in the trade union movement, the private sector, and at all three levels of government. He is a Research Associate of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and of the Centre for Urban Studies at the University of Toronto.

Gillian Berry
QUSA Member-at-Large
About QUSA and Committee Representation

The Queen’s University Staff Association (QUSA) represents the interests of Queen’s University non-unionized staff and membership is voluntary. New members are always welcome. Please visit our website for a membership form.

QUSA members are also invited to participate in various committees across campus. As required, these committee representative positions are advertised through our QUSA Listserv to all its members. As positions become available, we encourage you to submit your name outlining your interest and any particular qualifications that would be relevant for consideration in representing said committee.

We thank all outgoing committee members for their service to QUSA and to Queen’s. Please see our website for a complete list of all Committee Representatives.

2009-10 Executive Committee

President:
Spring Forsberg, Arts & Science 78560
Vice-President:
Peg Hauschildt, Physics 32169
Secretary:
Melissa Gunton, Student Affairs 33332
Treasurer:
Tracy Elliott, University Secretariat 77225

Members-at-Large

General Support Staff:
Davin Carlson, Psychology 32867
Gillian Berry, University Registrar’s Office 74058
Pamela Bandy-Dafoe, Chemistry 32630
Patti George, Strategic Procurement 32136
Susanne Cliff-Jungling, eQUIP Task Force 78507

Research, Grant & Contract Staff:
Kelly Petrunka, Better Beginnings 74952
Susan Kemp, School of English 75530

West Campus Staff:
Jessica Maskell, Education 77295

QUSA Business Administrator:
Myrna Horton 32215

Council on Employment Equity

Ruth Smith (ITS) has been appointed as a new QUSA representative on the Council on Employment Equity (CEE). Thank you for your willingness to get involved and for your support of QUSA!
Welcome and Announcements

Welcome to New Members

Welcome to the following new members who have joined since the last (November) issue of the Courier:

Zabrina Hannah  Development
Kathy Hoover  Geography

Condolences

Joan Knox (Geography) recently informed us of the loss of her partner of 33 years, Larry Woods, who passed away on February 22 this year. We extend our deepest sympathies to Joan at this time.

Congratulations

Kelly McGarry (Strategic Procurement Services) would like to announce the birth of her son, Braeden James St. John who arrived on February 18. Congratulations Kelly!

Dental Benefit

As per the Agreement between QUSA and Queen’s, the University will be responsible for the full cost of the Dental benefit premium for General Support Staff and Research, Grant and Contract Staff. Please be advised that as of January 1, 2010 you will no longer be charged this premium and the Dental benefit will not appear on your salary notice.

About the Courier

The Courier is the on-line Newsletter of the Queen's University Staff Association, and is published three times a year. Barbara Quesnel, Sharon David and Myrna Horton form the current Editorial Committee. The Courier belongs to you, our QUSA members, and we welcome your submissions. We encourage you to share your news of milestones in your life and career (births, marriages, promotions, retirements, volunteer service, etc.). Pictures are always welcome. Before each issue we will advise, via our ListServ, the deadline for receipt of such information.

Longer articles and letters on topics of interest to the Queen's University staff community, or in response to Courier content, are also welcome. We ask you to contact the Business Administrator at the QUSA Office, so that a word limit can be agreed and space can be allocated. Submissions must be original and signed. Opinions expressed are those of the writer. Please include your name, affiliation and phone number, and submit by email to: qusa@queensu.ca We reserve the right to edit submissions to address style, length and legal considerations. We also reserve the right to edit or reject any submission that does not comply with policy.