

# SAFAGRAM

## President's Message

By Blair Howes



Hello Faculty,

Another year has absolutely flown by with most daytime/full time programs finished and convocation commencing this week. Most of the apprentice programs will be finished by the end of next week.

No new information on Bill No. 2 as of yet that would stop binding arbitration on our third year wage reopener. Most of you have probably seen my response letter to the Government. I assure you the letters from the U of C and Keyano College were just as strong.

Stay tuned as we may be fastening our seat belts for the turbulence that will likely come in the fall.

Some of the SAFA executive and I attended the Accommodation Law Conference in Edmonton at the end of May. There were some interesting updates to several ongoing cases in and around Alberta especially ones relating to Family Status issues. Rest assured your executive team and Labour Relations Officer are well informed of these changes.

The weather up North was eerie to say the least; it was pleasantly warm, but the smoke was thicker than London pea soup fog.

The bargaining team has had their first meeting about the Letter of Understanding (LOU) on the adjunct instructors but have not yet started on the wage reopener.

I have had several questions about Brad Donaldson's e-mail at the end of May. I will call it the blue marble e-mail for easy reference. The consultation he referred to in the e-mail is actually about conversations you (the Faculty members) will be having with your Academic Chairs about workloads. I will add some clarity to it as there seems to be confusion around whether SAFA or Faculty were consulted. As there were no Faculty members or SAFA executive members on SAIT's workload committee, it was not a consultation by definition in the Collective Agreement.

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SAFAGRAM editorial policy, as approved by the SAFA Executive on June 14, 1995, is as follows:

1. The Editorial Board has the final say as to what is included or deleted from the newsletter.
2. Editorial Board decisions about newsletter material must be agreed to by consensus.
3. The newsletter will include a disclaimer stating that the views expressed in its content do not necessarily represent the views of the Editorial Board or SAFA.
4. All material included in the newsletter must
  - be signed by the author when submitted to the editors, but anonymity may be requested and granted for printing.
  - be based on "reasoned argument" if personal criticism is used.
  - not involve name-calling.
  - not include sexist, racist, or homophobic comments.
  - be related to SAIT, although this will be interpreted broadly.

**The views expressed in SAFAGRAM do not necessarily represent the views of the Editorial Board or SAFA.**

<http://www.safacalgary.com/>

# Labour Relations Officer (LRO) Report

By Al Brown, LRO



Hi Everyone:

Summer break is approaching, but before we leave for holidays, I wanted to let you know where we are with regard to negotiations on two important topics.

As you know, our Collective Agreement that was ratified last June contained a provision for SAIT and SAFA to reconvene by May 15, 2019, to negotiate a salary increase for year three (Academic Year 2019/20) of the current Collective Agreement. If we are unable to come to an agreement at the bargaining table by September 30, 2019, we can proceed to **binding arbitration**.

However, SAFA was contacted by the new Deputy Minister of Finance, Athana Mentzelopoulos, with an invitation to consultation regarding a delay to Public Sector Wage Reopener Arbitrations.

Essentially the Government is contemplating legislating a delay in our ability to advance to binding arbitration should we not be able to reach an agreement with SAIT on a wage increase for the third year of our current Collective Agreement. SAFA was invited to a meeting in which further rationale would be provided and where we were invited to share SAFA's initial feedback.

The rationale as presented was: *"Given the change to Alberta's economic circumstances and uncertainty of the impact to Alberta's finances, government is contemplating steps to delay Public Sector Wage Reopener Arbitrations where government is funder, employer, or has a direct governance relationship. A delay may give government the time to make an informed decision on how best to approach the wage reopener arbitrations, based partially on advice from the MacKinnon Panel."*

SAFA subsequently provided a written submission to Government that expressed our view that this hurried teleconference with an advance notice of only one day did not constitute "consultation" and that it, instead, indicated that the Government had already made up its mind.

So, for now, our wage reopener negotiations are in stasis awaiting further information. You can read further by following this link to a news article on the subject.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/alberta-contracts-public-sector-unions-ucp-government-1.5171343>

The designation of fee for service instructors (now known as Adjunct Instructors) as academic staff members resolved a long-standing friction between SAIT and SAFA. This will entitle our adjunct instructors to SAFA representation.

SAFA has entered into discussions with SAIT to review the Letter of Understanding covering the Academic Staff category known as Adjunct Instructors. This Letter of Understanding is contained in our current Collective Agreement and stipulates several terms and conditions of employment that are particular to this group—most notably the salary scale.

In order to assure we have a clearer understanding of the issues that affect this group, SAFA has an Adjunct Instructor as one of our bargaining team members.

Last, but hardly least, please remember that Banner 9 is coming soon. Please keep an eye out for communications and training opportunities from SAIT.

As always, please stop by the SAFA Office N201 in the Burns Building or contact me directly at Ext. 4067 or e-mail [al.brown@sait.ca](mailto:al.brown@sait.ca) if you have any questions or comments.

In solidarity. ♡

## Costly Typos

More costly typos.

### JUAN PABLO DAVILA BUYS HIGH, SELLS LOW The damage: \$175 million

Online trading was still in its relative infancy in 1994, a fact Juan Pablo Davila will never forget. It all started when the former copper trader—who was employed by Chile's government-owned company Codelco—mistakenly bought stock he was trying to sell. After realizing the error, he went on a bit of a trading rampage—buying and selling enough stock that, by day's end, he had cost the company/country \$175 million. Davila was, of course, fired. And Codelco ended up filing suit against Merrill Lynch, alleging that the brokerage allowed Davila to make unauthorized trades. Merrill coughed up \$25 million to settle the dispute—but not before a new word entered the popular lexicon: *davilar*, a verb used to indicate a screw-up of epic magnitude.

### CAR DEALERSHIP PULLS A MICHAEL SCOTT The damage: \$50 million (or \$250,000 in Walmart dollars)

And you thought alien sightings were the only interesting thing happening in Roswell, New Mexico! In 2007, a local car dealership came up with a brilliant plan to stimulate sluggish sales: mail out 50,000 scratch tickets, one of which would reveal a \$1000 cash prize. But Atlanta-based Force Events Direct Marketing Company mistakenly upped the ante when they printed said scratch tickets, making every one of them a grand-prize winner, for a grand payout of \$50 million. Unable to honor the debt, the dealership instead offered a \$5 Walmart gift certificate for every winning ticket.

### NYC DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S LESSON IN BOOKKEEPING The damage: \$1.4 million

Humans and computers don't always play well together. In 2006, New York City comptroller William Thompson admitted that a typo—an extra letter, to be precise—caused its accounting software to misinterpret a document, leading the city's Department of Education to double its transportation spending (shelling out \$2.8 million instead of \$1.4 million). ♡

It is actually not a bad thing because the AC should be engaging the Faculty members on their individual workloads as per our LOU around the framework for assigning workloads. (See Below)

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**Letter of Understanding  
Between  
The Board of Governors of the Southern Alberta  
Institute of Technology (SAIT)  
And  
The SAIT Academic Faculty Association (SAFA)**

**RE: Workload criteria and expedited grievance process for Section 36 Workload**

The parties agree to trial the following for the duration of the 2017-2020 Collective Agreement:

**Trial Section 36.05 Framework (the trial framework):**

Class contact hours of an individual instructor shall be determined by the Dean or their designee (non-academic staff member) after giving consideration to all of:

- a. the past practice in assigning instructor class contact hours,
- b. the needs of developing programs,
- c. new course delivery, which may include courses being taught for the first time, the first time after a major revision or after five (5) years without teaching the course,
- d. the number of different course preparations,
- e. the time required for evaluation,
- f. the previous times the course material has been taught.

Should an academic staff member be concerned that their workload was not assigned in accordance with the trial framework for workload assignment in the School and that their workload assignment is unfair, inequitable, unreasonable or arbitrary, they may submit their concerns in regards to their workload assignment for review pursuant to this Letter of Understanding. The grievance procedure under Section 17-Grievance Procedure shall not apply.

**Trial Expedited Grievance Process:**

**Step I**

Academic staff members and Academic Chairs shall seek to resolve concerns over workload assignment as expediently and collegially as possible. The academic staff member shall first discuss the workload assignment with their Academic Chair within five (5) work days of receiving their finalized workload assignment. The Academic Chair must respond in writing to the concern within five (5) work days.

**Step II**

Within five (5) work days of the conclusion of Step I, the academic staff member may provide SAFA in writing their rationale for a grievance on workload assignment. SAFA will determine whether to proceed with a grievance based on the material submitted by

the academic staff member. If SAFA decides to submit a grievance, this must occur within (5) work days of receiving the rationale. The Dean or their designee shall render a written decision to SAFA within five (5) work days of receiving the grievance.

**Step III**

If, in the opinion of SAFA, the matter is not resolved satisfactorily in Step II, SAFA may submit a written grievance to the Vice-President (Academic) within five (5) work days of receiving the decision of the Dean or their designee. The grievance shall set forth the nature of the concerns about the workload assignment in relation to the process and factors in the trial framework.

The Vice-President (Academic) shall respond to SAFA in writing within five (5) work days of receiving the written grievance at Step III. The decision of the Vice-President (Academic) shall be final and binding.

This Letter of Understanding will expire on June 30, 2020. It may not be renewed without the explicit agreement of both Parties and is not subject to arbitration.

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**Points to Remember**

- On July 1 Banner 9 rolls out.
- Be aware that your payday amounts will change as there will be no mid-month advance, instead it will be your monthly net pay divided by two, and this will be the amount you get on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of the month.
- The SIR II evaluation tool ends June 30 and issues in a new era of student/instructor evaluations for the next academic year.
- The paper based ppo/ppr disappears on June 30. On July 1 it will be replaced by the new **My Performance Online**. Keep an eye on your page at SAIT for updates and training opportunities.

In closing, I would like to thank everyone who attended the SAFA events this year—you are the reason they are great.

I would like to thank the SAFA Executive and Faculty Council for their participation in the operations of the Association.

As well, I would like to thank you the SAIT Faculty at large. You are the reason that working at SAIT is fun, exciting, and occasionally challenging but always good spirited.

Take some time to relax and destress this summer and spend some quality time with your families. You have earned and deserve this time off. As always, safety first in any of the activities you enjoy over the summer.

Always, in service of membership. ♡



# A View on Assessments

By Eugene Blanchard

Why do we give students formal closed book exams and quizzes? Is it to provide feedback to the instructor on how well the curriculum was taught? Is it to provide feedback to the student to determine how well the student learned the material? Is it to compare and rank the students against each other? The traditional definition of assessment is to answer “yes” to all three questions, but what if these formal assessments can become part of the learning process?

Back in the days before the Internet, a large part of assessments relied on rote memory: “How much information can a student memorize?” Students spent a good portion of their study time committing definitions, commands, and processes to memory. Times have changed; information is instantly available via the Internet using laptops, PCs, iPads, PDAs, tablets, and cell phones. If you don’t know something, google it, and within seconds you have an answer. The requirement for memorizing subject material has drastically changed!

How does that affect our assessments? By creating open book/open internet assessments, two outcomes can be achieved: higher-level cognitive skill level questions can be used and a student has the opportunity to learn while taking the assessment.

With open book/open internet, it provides a real world environment where if you don’t know the answer, you research it, evaluate your options, and determine the correct solution. Open book/open internet assessments allow more difficult questions to be asked that go beyond the basic knowledge and comprehension. An understanding of the question and the subject matter is required in order to determine what the answer requires. A student cannot google the answer as it doesn’t exist because it consists of many unique scenarios and concepts.

Our goal at SAIT is to create functional graduates who have gained the skills required in their field. During open book/open internet assessments, if a student does not know the answer to a question, they have the opportunity to research it, answer it, and learn it. It adds a learning environment to the formal assessments which fits in with our goal of creating functional graduates.

Always warn students that open book/open internet assessments are more difficult than closed book ones. Open book exams have an emphasis on knowing the course material intimately and knowing how it is all tied together.

Something interesting about open book/open internet assessments is that it reduces academic dishonesty. Students cheat because they feel that they don’t have the knowledge/material available to pass the assessment. If you give them the world, then they have no need to cheat. I’ve observed that weak students will still struggle with open book exams because it is often the first time that they’ve reviewed their notes.

Are open book/open internet assessments the end all/be all of assessments? No, they are not. A fellow educator and mentor of mine, Dave Samson, opened my eyes to an interesting concept. For formal assessments, the students are allowed to bring in a one page hand written journal, which we’ve known in the past as a “cheat sheet.” The students jump at the chance to create these journals and go to great extents to write as small as possible to cram in as much detail as possible. Every student participates in creating their journal from the strongest to the weakest students.

So why would a journal be so interesting to educators? Well, it’s not about the assessment; it’s about the students who are creating the journal. What the journal has done is to provide the motivation to study, review, and summarize their course notes. Even the weakest student participates in creating a journal because they think of it as a cheat sheet not as studying. It is a devious way to get students to study that works extremely well!

One observation that occurs as the course progresses is that the journal notes become shorter and shorter. At first, the journal sheet is crammed with notes but by the end of the semester, the journal is typically half a page in length or less. This is a clear indication of the value of the study sheets and the effectiveness on learner engagement. ➡

## Costly Typos

More costly typos.

### AN EXOTIC VACATION BECOMES X-RATED

The damage: \$10 million (plus \$230 per month)

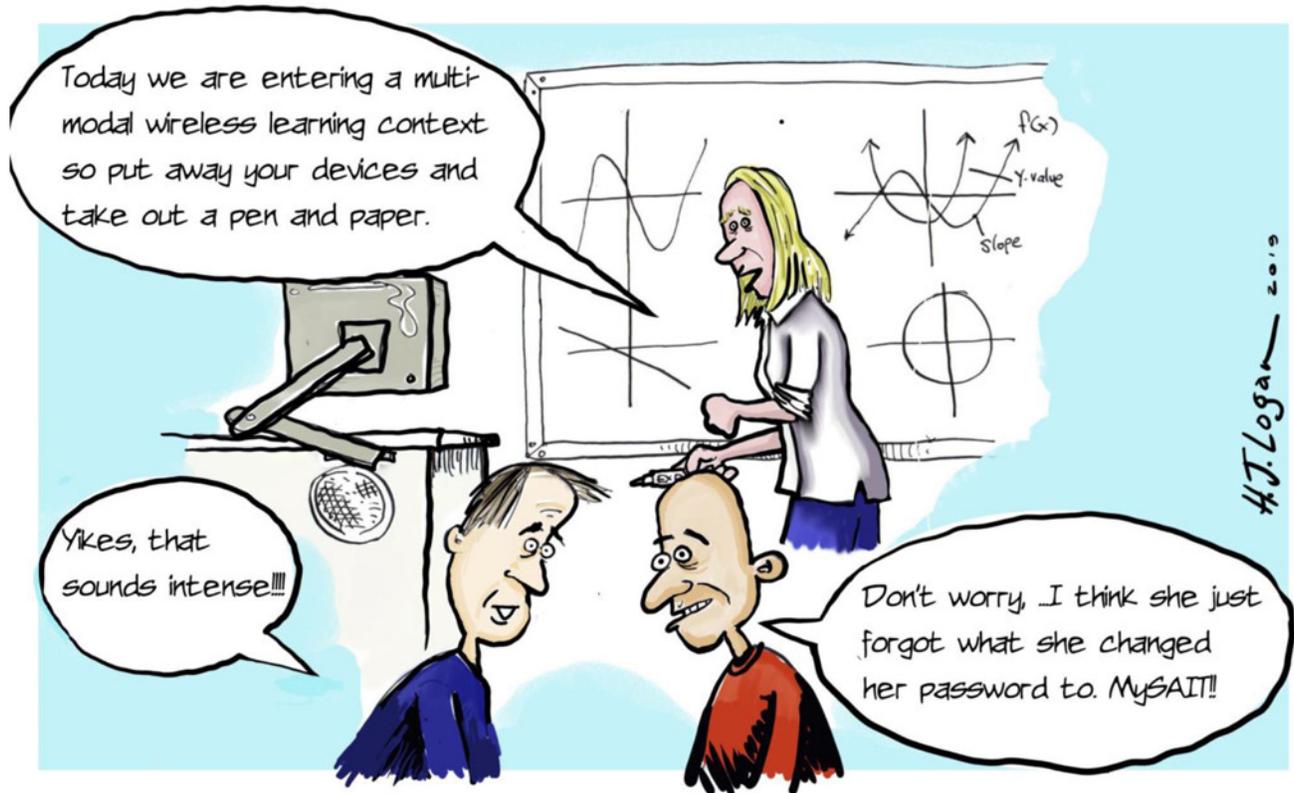
Remember the Yellow Pages? Yeah, well Banner Travel Services would like to forget them. Years ago, the now-shuttered Sonoma, California-based travel agency decided to market its services in the phone book ... only to find that the final printing advertised its specialization in exotic destinations as a forte in “erotic” destinations. The typo certainly piqued the interest of some new customers, just not the kind of clientele the company was hoping to attract. The printer offered to waive its \$230 monthly listing fee, but Banner sued for \$10 million anyway.

### NYC MTA’S LESSON IN PROOFREADING

The damage: \$500,000

Not to be outdone, just last month, New York City’s Transportation Authority had to recall 160,000 maps and posters that announced the recent hike for the minimum amount put on pay-per-ride cards from \$4.50 to \$5.00. The problem? A typographical error that listed the “new” price as \$4.50. Oops! Of course, it will only take 100,000 rides on the 6 train to make up the difference. So straphangers lose (yet again).

*When you need to change your password at the end of the semester...with all the marking...and you just received your teaching assignments for next semester!!*



**HAVE A SAFE AND FUN  
SUMMER BREAK**

FROM THE SAFAGRAM EDITORIAL STAFF