



acifa

Alberta Colleges & Institutes Faculties Association

# Faculty Circuit

October - November 2009

## President's Message

by Dave Purkis



Last week I attended the fall meeting of the ACIFA Presidents' Council. I find it interesting to observe how much the various faculty associations have in common in spite of their differences in size, geography and programming. During the round-table reports, the associations share their current issues and questions which often result in lively discussions through which we all gain a level of experience we could never achieve by working on our own. It is easy for a faculty association facing a daunting situation to feel isolated and unsure of their next step. Hearing how other associations dealt with a similar situation can be very reassuring.

An example of this type of information sharing occurred during this past Presidents' Council. One of our member associations is attempting to deal with an issue that is sufficiently serious for them that they have engaged counsel and they are examining the possibility of launching a serious legal action. The president of one of the other associations spontaneously moved an expression of support, which was passed unanimously. To some, this might seem like an empty gesture, but in fact it was not. It meant that the other associations share their sister association's concern and are ready to stand by with their collective experience, emotional support and yes, material resources. The member associations all understand that it could just as easily be them that needs help and that only by working together can the associations within ACIFA provide the services their own members require. It is this type of cooperation which proves the usefulness of ACIFA to its members, and as I said at the beginning, keeps things interesting.



Members of Presidents' Council convene at the Matrix Hotel in Edmonton for the October 17 meeting.

## The Call for Submissions process is now underway for the 2010 Conference!

**Benefits of pursuing the opportunity to present at the 2010 conference in beautiful Jasper include:**

- Conference registration fee reduced by \$100.
- One night free accommodation at the exquisite Jasper Park Lodge.
- Opportunity to network with colleagues from across the province on the concepts and ideas presented in your session.
- Excellent presentation experience for your portfolio.
- 2 meals paid for presenters not registering for the conference.



Mark your calendar: deadline for submissions is **February 15, 2010.**

\* Find the Call for Submissions on **page 3.**

## Annual ACIFA Climate Survey



The annual ACIFA Climate survey, distributed electronically through your faculty association office by mid-November, is a valuable tool for the tabulation and analysis of the views of academic staff members across the province concerning working conditions and attitudes within their respective institutions.

The Climate Survey asks individual academic staff members to indicate level of agreement on a scale of 1 to 5, with thirteen statements such as:

*Senior administration communicates openly with faculty.*

*I have the resources I need to do my job effectively.*

*The president of this institution provides effective leadership.*

In addition, local academic staff associations may also take the opportunity to include further questions specific to their own institutions.

The relatively high response rate from ACIFA members and the continuity from year to year of the thirteen core survey questions provide a strong foundation to assist academic staff associations in discussions with their administration regarding key areas of concern within their institutions.

A comparative, cross-institutional score chart for each of the thirteen system wide questions will be published in the ACIFA Faculty Circuit next spring.

Please fill out your Survey by **December 18, 2009.**

## New ACIFA Executive Vice President – Doug Frattini



ACIFA would like to welcome back Doug Frattini of Grande Prairie Regional College, to ACIFA Executive Council. Doug will be taking Kazem Mashkournia's place, as Executive Vice President, as Kazem has accepted a Dean position at Grande Prairie Regional College. Doug is no stranger to ACIFA as he held the position of Vice President Records and Finance with ACIFA Executive for four years and has been a part of ACIFA Presidents' Council for six years. Doug is a chartered

accountant by profession and has been an instructor at Grande Prairie Regional College for nineteen years. Doug also has extensive involvement with Grande Prairie Regional College Academic Staff Association's Executive and has served two years as President, four years as Treasurer, and one year as Member at Large dealing with grievances. Welcome back Doug!



Doug celebrates his return to ACIFA Executive with a spin around the dance floor with former Executive member Paul Hawthorn. This photo was taken at a recent tryout for *Dancing with the Stars*. Tragically, the duo missed making the final cut.



*Alberta Colleges and Institutes Faculties Association*

## 2010 Spring Conference

May 16-19, 2010

Jasper Park Lodge

### *Call for Submissions*

#### Themes:

#### **Come Learn**

- \* Creativity
- \* Motivation
- \* Growth

#### **Go Teach**

- \* Best Practices
- \* Diversity Awareness
- \* Technology

#### **Think Green**

- \* At Home
- \* At Work
- \* Within Yourself

*Hosted by NAIT Academic Staff Association*



\*The **Call for Submissions form** is available through your Faculty Association office and will also be on the ACIFA website ([www.acifa.ca](http://www.acifa.ca)).

Please let us know (via [devlin@acifa.ca](mailto:devlin@acifa.ca) or 780-423-4440) if you have any questions about the conference session submission process. ACIFA 2010 takes place May 16 to 19. Concurrent sessions run on Monday, May 17 and Tuesday, May 18.



## 2010 Award For Innovation in Teaching

*The aim of the Award for Innovation in Teaching is to recognize and encourage the use of innovative and creative teaching methods and design which lead to improved student learning.*

*This province-wide award attracts both recognition and a financial award of \$1,500 for the faculty member or team and \$500.00 for the faculty member's faculty association. Certificates of Commendation will be awarded to the three runners-up.*

### **Eligibility**

The award is open to all ACIFA members. The nomination may be for an individual or a group/team. Nominations for the award are made by colleagues with the consent of the innovator(s). Nominations must adhere to the *Format for Applications* below.

An innovation which has already received this award cannot be resubmitted the following year. Innovations which have been unsuccessful but have received a Certificate of Commendation are eligible for resubmission, within the context of the guidelines, the following year.

### **The Nomination Process**

Each participating ACIFA member association will conduct a nomination and selection process at the local level, in accordance with the guidelines in this document, to select a nominee to be submitted to the ACIFA Awards Committee. The ACIFA Awards Committee, established by the Professional Affairs Committee of ACIFA, will select the winner of the award from nominees put forward by each of the participating local faculty associations.

### **Selection Criteria**

- The extent to which the innovation has had a practical outcome that improved teaching, learning, curriculum design, and/or assessment.
- Evidence of student satisfaction and learning outcomes.
- Evidence that the innovation was successfully integrated into the total learning process for the relevant course of study.
- The potential for the innovation to be applied to different fields of study
- The extent to which the innovation made effective and efficient use of resources.

### **Format for Applications: 2-3 page limit plus appendices**

Please provide information in the following format:

1. Innovator/project team details: name(s), position, and college/institute
2. A description of the innovation
3. The rationale for implementing the change
4. The outcomes of the innovation
5. The wider application of the innovation in post-secondary education
6. Names and signatures of two nominees
7. Any supporting documentation to be attached as appendices

### **Judging Panels: provincial and local**

Five members elected on an annual basis from and by the Professional Affairs Committee of ACIFA will select the final award winner and three runners-up from the nominees submitted by the local faculty associations.

The local faculty association judging committees are to be selected and structured by the local faculty association as they deem appropriate for their association.

### **Mutual Obligations**

The ACIFA Awards Committee will undertake to award the winner of an Innovation/Creativity Award in Teaching with:

- An announcement in the winner's local newspaper and the ACIFA newsletter
- \$1,500.00 made available to the winner and another \$500.00 to the winner's faculty association

*(continued on page 5)*

- A formal presentation at the ACIFA Annual Conference
- Coverage of expenses for the winner to attend the ACIFA Annual Conference to receive their award.

The award winner will be expected to:

- Attend the ACIFA Annual Conference to accept the award
- Agree to submit for publication in the ACIFA newsletter a description of the innovation and its successful implementation before the end of the year in which the award was won.

**Application Dates**

Applications must be submitted to the faculty member's faculty association by the date set by the local faculty association.

Each association's selection process must be completed in time to submit their nominee to ACIFA by **February 26, 2010**.

The ACIFA Awards Committee will make the final decision by the third week of March to allow sufficient time to arrange for the recognition of the winner at the ACIFA Annual Conference.

*The 2010 award is sponsored and administered by  
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## 2007 Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Award Winner – Bev Biggeman

Each year ACIFA through the Alberta Public Post-Secondary Trust Fund awards up to two grants of \$1,000.00 for research projects related to improving teaching and learning conducted by members of ACIFA. The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) refers to taking a systematic look at a teaching and learning practice and recording what was done, why it was done, collecting data, analyzing data and reflecting on how the results might influence future teaching endeavors. When done carefully and thoughtfully, this type of research can improve an individual's teaching and provide guidance for improvement for others. Award recipients are required to present their project at the ACIFA annual conference and to write a summary article for the ACIFA newsletter. The following is 2007 Award winner Bev Biggeman's article.

A significant component of the curriculum reform initiative, embarked upon in 2007 at Olds College, is the articulation and evaluation of self-directed learning activities. Those who were involved in designing, or redesigning, learning outcomes and activities were aware of the need for a definition of the term "self-directed learning" to serve as a starting point for developing activities that would support the revised learning outcomes.

As part of the research on self-directed learning being undertaken by various members of Olds College faculty, face-to-face interviews were conducted with 90 instructional staff to ascertain their views on what the term meant and how they would motivate their students to take responsibility for their learning. In addition, they were asked to comment on issues or challenges they foresaw in implementing this new standard. The same questionnaire was distributed to 12 Olds High School teachers. A modified version of the questionnaire was distributed to 42 Olds College students. The full text of the responses is available for analysis upon request.

Although the intent of the research was to develop a shared definition of the term "self-directed learning", the responses suggested there currently exists a tacit understanding of the term and that several strategies are regularly employed to assist students in becoming self-directed learners. What became more apparent was that the definition of the term was multi-faceted in that respondents cited various applications of the term that were most relevant for use in their instruction. More importantly, the research supported the need for a conversation to occur about the meaning of the term, particularly in the context of ensuring this type of learning be articulated in the curriculum and consequently that it be formally evaluated. With Olds College's reliance on competency-based learning outcomes, the inclusion of statements outlining self-directed learning opportunities was a logical piece of the curriculum reform initiative.

When participants were asked to define the term self-directed learning, they tended to respond with characteristics that fell into either of two categories: independent learning or investigative learning. Instructors need to be responsible for creating learning experiences that engage learners and for providing adequate support and feedback. The student group that was interviewed defined the term as "learning without direct supervision" and "solving problems on their own".

The qualitative research supports the following definition of self-directed learning posed by Johanna L. Keirns of San Jose University in her book *Designs for Self-Instruction: Principles, Processes and Issues in Developing Self-directed Learning* published by Allyn & Bacon (1999). Her definition suggests: "As a methodology for instruction, self-directed learning ordinarily refers to a learning situation in which an individual student or trainee works with instructional materials on his or her own time, without direct supervision or guidance from either instructor or fellow students. Theoretical investigation of "self-directed learning" or "self-regulated learning" in recent years has focused on the skills and abilities which individuals employ to guide their cognitive experiences in learning situations. A final use of the term carries a connotation of a philosophy of education, the viewpoint of educators who consider that the role of teachers should be to guide and facilitate the learning experiences of students, but that the learners themselves must be seen to be the actual directors of their learning."

Keirns' three-pronged approach to self-directed learning: i.e. students working on their own, students developing skills and abilities to guide their thinking processes, and instructors facilitating student learning experiences, summarizes the responses to the questions posed in the research project. This definition of self-directed learning could be adopted for use in developing activities to support the goals of curriculum reform.

Challenges in implementing a philosophy that students should take more ownership for their learning include issues regarding instructional support and training for the development of self-directed learning activities, and the perceived risks involved in facilitating the training of students with diverse learning styles. Students are concerned about being asked to do more work outside of the classroom and receiving adequate support to be successful in the completion of their self-directed learning activities. As a result, Olds College instructors will continue to research the development of self-directed learning activities to support the new curriculum and assist students in becoming independent and investigative learners.

- Bev Biggeman, Olds College