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Job Action Committee

Faculty Performance
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On Stream

April 2025

Selkirk College Faculty Association

YEAR END REFLECTIONS

by Takaia Larsen, SCFA President

As the 2025 academic year winds down, I want to share some reflections from my first year as SCFA President. It has certainly not been dull! When I began my term last year, I had a few goals in mind, and I think we have made some real progress toward them. We have tried out several new initiatives intended to increase member engagement and build more substantial connections between our campuses and communities. I hope to continue that work over the next year (for me, those have been the real fun parts of this job). The SCFA Executive has also been working on updating our union documents, processes and communications and again, I think we have made considerable progress. We will continue to plug away at those tasks over the next year. Many of you have stepped up to lend a hand on a variety of SCFA projects, and I would like to thank you all for those efforts – every little bit helps the SCFA become stronger,

and that is solidarity at its finest!

Beyond these successes, this year has also been rife with challenges. In all honesty, I never anticipated that I would get to know the collective agreement so well over this first year, or that we would have to face such widespread layoffs. In this context, our biggest priority has been trying to provide as much support as possible to all SCFA members. Unfortunately, all signs are indicating that this will be an ongoing process, and I want to encourage all of you to reach out if you have questions—ask an SCFA Executive member or your Chief Steward. If we don't have the answers to your questions right away, we will find them for you! We are also ready to attend meetings with you, take notes, and just generally help any way we can.

As this academic year wraps up, I am looking forward to attending the FPSE AGM in May and am already turning my thoughts

to next year. We do have SCFA Executive elections on the horizon and some standing committee vacancies to fill. I hope to see many of you at our upcoming AGM on May 1st for these elections and at our first annual SCFA Retirement Recognition Dinner immediately following the meeting, at 6 PM.

Please also consider running for one of the **SCFA seats on Education Council** (deadline for expressions of interest is May 5th) – having as many SCFA voices on this important governance body is essential if we want to be part of decision making process at the EdCo level.

And perhaps most importantly, I hope you have some fun and inspiring activities planned for the spring and summer – I think we can all use some extra rejuvenation this year.

In solidarity,

Takaia

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE SECTOR

COMPILED BY LEESA DEAN

Takaia Larsen On Roger's TV: Selkirk College International Student Decline

A few weeks ago, Roger's TV came to Selkirk College to interview SCFA President Takaia Larsen about the current layoff situation. "It's hard," Larsen stated, "because the people who are laid off first are the newest and youngest faculty members. These are the most precarious workers in academia. Our long-standing faculty are great, but who is going to replace them afterward? It's heartbreaking because many of these folks moved to the Kootenays and brought their families, and now they have no job." Watch the video [here](#).

Canadian University Teachers Warned Against Travelling to the United States

The association that represents academic staff at Canadian universities is warning its members against non-essential travel to the United States. The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) says it released updated travel advice Tuesday due to the "political landscape" created by the Trump administration and reports of some Canadians encountering difficulties while crossing the border. The association says academics who are from countries that have tense diplomatic relations with the United States, or who have themselves expressed negative views about the Trump administration, should be particularly cautious about attempting to cross the border.

Read the article [here](#).

B.C. post-secondary institutions deal with loss of revenue amid cuts to international student permits

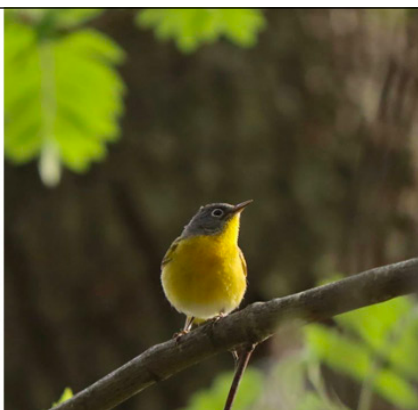
Schools and colleges in B.C. continue to deal with the fallout of the federal government's move to issue fewer international student permits. In January 2024, the federal government announced a two-year cap on the number of international students that colleges and universities in Canada are able to accept each school year. More than a year later, educators say the impacts of the change are being felt at post-secondary institutions across the province.

Selkirk College in B.C.'s West Kootenay region says it is closing learning centres in the communities of Kaslo and Nakusp as it addresses financial challenges related to federal restrictions on international student recruitment.

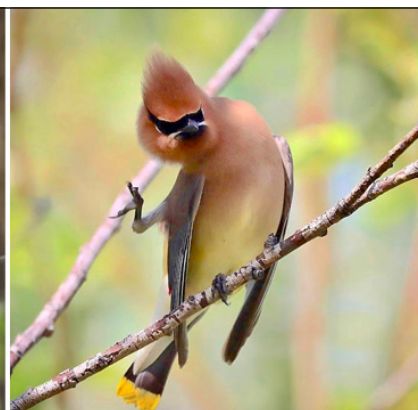
Read the article [here](#).



Rumped Warbler



Nashville Warbler



Cedar Waxwing

PHOTOS SUBMITTED BY SARAH FAWCETT



May 3rd, 2025
World Press Freedom Day

CHIEF STEWARD UPDATE

BY SHANNON SHAH

SELF-CARE AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

This is my favorite time of year. I love the colours, the blossoms, and the surprise waterfalls. As you head out of that zone of final grades and head into planning days, I hope you are taking a bit of time to enjoy being outside.

There is a group of health practitioners who are working on a project to encourage everyone to spend at least 20 minutes outside twice a week. Recent studies demonstrate a positive effect on your brain just by being outside. I will update you on the research side later but for now, just try that 20 minutes twice a week if you don't already have this practice.

There have been so many things going on in the college community like campus closures, but for this report, I would like us to circle back to the Lunch Club discussion regarding academic freedom and equity. A group of SCFA

members met on Thursday, April 3 to explore this topic from different angles, and I was one of the speakers. If you aren't in the habit of attending Lunch Club events, I would encourage you to seek these opportunities when we start up again in the fall.

Did you know CAUT (Canadian Association of University Teachers) has an academic freedom toolkit? It's a comprehensive and valuable resource. Here is just one quote from it: *"Equity and academic freedom are essential to the health and vibrant functioning of a post-secondary education institution. It is through free thought, investigation, and the development and dissemination of ideas that society advances and progress is made"* (CAUT toolkit, 2025).

Click here to access the toolkit: [Take Action – Academic Freedom and Equity | CAUT](#)

Below are three ways to protect academic freedom and advance equity:

- » Protect job security for contract academic staff;
- » Increase your knowledge and application of academic freedom and equity;
- » Support academic freedom, well defined and described, being a part of the collective agreement.

I hope to see you all at the AGM and retiree celebration on May 1st. We have lots to discuss, and even more to celebrate moving forward.

As always, please reach out with any questions or concerns.



Before and after: Summer Gauvreau and Veronica Roberge spearheaded a massive nursing lab re-organization project last summer after consulting with nearby institutions. They will be presenting on the project in May at UBCO.



ACADEMIC FREEDOM

A CORNERSTONE OF POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

On April 3rd, SCFA members from different areas of the college met for a Lunch Club discussion about academic freedom, what it means, why it's important, how it's under attack, and how it can be protected. If you missed the event, here are just a few of the many discussion points that were presented.

What is academic freedom? Here is an excerpt from CAUT's Academic Freedom Toolkit:

At its core, academic freedom ensures that in their teaching, research, scholarship, publication, creative expression, participation in the affairs of the university, and exercise of their rights as citizens, academics are not curtailed, disciplined, or censored by the administration, by colleagues, or by outside bodies or individuals. It includes the freedom of scholars to inquire into and challenge prevailing orthodoxies or systems without being subjected to reprisal, such as denying them appointment, promotion, or depriving them of their employment status, institutional rights, or privileges.

Members are encouraged to explore the toolkit and its many facets [here](#).

Jennie Barron: Courageous Dialogues and the Pitfalls of Polarization

When we talk about academic freedom, we sometimes think that it exists to protect our rights to say things that may be unpopular or at odds with mainstream thinking or current dogma, (anywhere on the political spectrum). But I think that even more than that, it's necessary to try to protect/repopulate/encourage the many spaces and positions that exist between two poles of thought — to affirm the necessity of thinking beyond polarities — because it is in this space that complexity, nuance, and honest exploration of ideas reside.

- ◆ This is in keeping with the idea that the university should be about encouraging inquiry and fostering diverse thought and critical thinking skills. Students can't learn to think critically if they are not exposed to ideas that they might disagree with. If they aren't permitted to voice, or even imagine, contrary viewpoints to their own (or what they perceive the instructor's to be) they become defenseless, unable to ask the

kinds of questions that can lead them to develop their own critiques when they leave the university.

- ◆ We should be "complicating the narrative" – resisting the temptation to iron out inconvenient facts or uncertainties – and fostering the capacity for both/and thinking:
 - » Example: I will acknowledge that some pro-Palestinian activists have said and done things that cross the line into anti-Semitism. The risk of saying so – in a polarized climate – is that others may seize on this admission and exaggerate so as to make it seem as if the majority, or even a significant minority, of student activists have done this. I don't believe that is true at all.
 - » "Both/and" thinking is so important but also puts us in a precarious position insofar as we can be easily misunderstood or willfully misrepresented.

Shannon Shah: Summary of AAC&U Report on Academic Freedom

Shannon attended a CAUT conference on the topic of academic freedom in February, and one of the topics discussed was [this extensive study](#) conducted a year ago by AAC&U. The subjects were American educators, and much has happened in the past year in the United States. Still, the findings from a year ago are telling, and they echo issues that have been raised by CAUT in Canada as well:

- ◆ More than 1 in 3 faculty members perceived a recent decline in their academic freedom (and this data is from before the Trump Administration).
- ◆ Faculty are concerned about restrictions on academic freedom and worry that expressing their views freely may lead to online harassment or professional repercussions.
- ◆ In the current climate, faculty are themselves less willing to address controversial topics and more likely to self-censor when it comes to expressing political or controversial views.

Sarah James and Pablo Pastor:

- ◆ Sarah James gave numerous examples of threats to academic freedom in the USA (Yale, Harvard, Northwestern, Columbia threatened with funding freezes and grant suspensions over allegedly failing to suppress campus activism).
- ◆ She discussed CAUT's March 18th article which signalled how Canadian researchers funded by certain US agencies were asked to confirm that their research:
 - » does not include a climate or "environmental justice" component
 - » does not contain diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) elements
 - » does not ascribe to "gender ideology"
 - » increases American influence globally
- ◆ Sarah and Pablo both addressed how institutions across Canada have adopted various policies and mechanisms to enforce "civil-ity," such as "respectful workplace policies," "institutional neutrality" and "directors of risk management," which ultimately work to undermine academic freedom, implying that we all need to be respectful and polite, which is a way of cloaking censorship of academic freedom.
- ◆ Sarah and Pablo both addressed anti-intellectualism and its implications - a trend in which defunding and polarization prevent constructive dialogue and the exploration and contestation of (sometimes controversial) ideas, leading to a decline in the application of critical thinking and the appreciation for complexity and nuance, and ultimately with implications for the functioning of democracy.
- ◆ Pablo pointed out that our academic freedom is not fully integrated into the collective agreement. Instead, the language is situated in LOU #11. LOUs need to be re-negotiated with every collective agreement.

In conclusion, we urge members to keep an eye out for CAUT bulletins and articles at large on this topic and to report any situations you believe challenge your academic freedom to the SCFA Executive.

JOB ACTION COMMITTEE REPORT

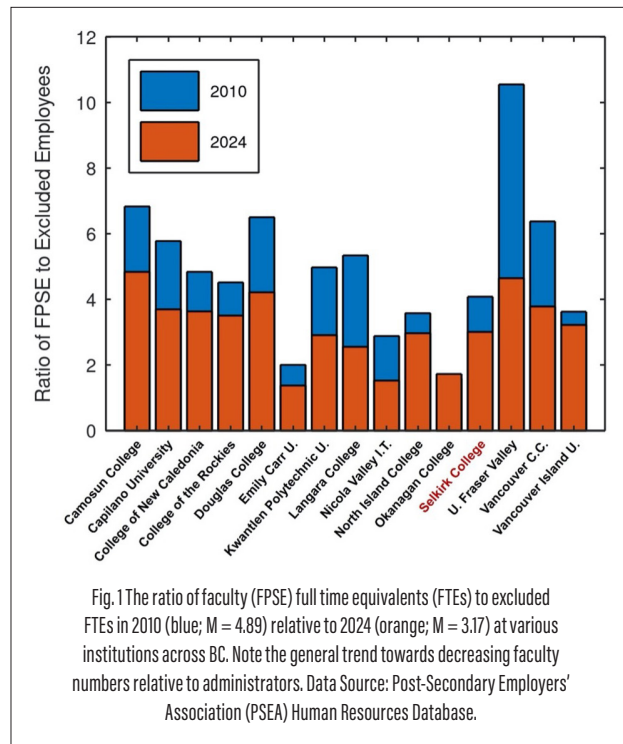
by Aubrey Demchuk

DATA ON ADMINISTRATIVE BLOAT

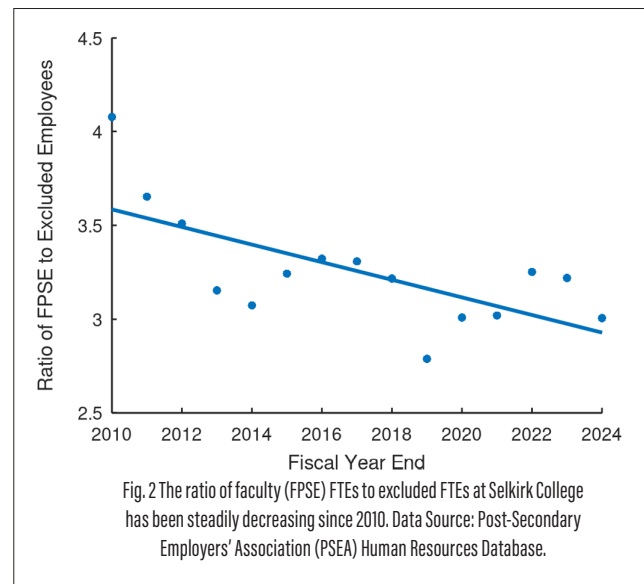
One issue the SCFA's Job Action Committee is currently looking at is "administrative bloat." This issue has become a growing concern among colleges and universities in British Columbia, mirroring a broader trend across North America. Since 2009, institutions have faced increasing criticisms for expanding administrative ranks without corresponding increases in faculty or academic programming. For

Selkirk College's practices follow this trend. While the decline in faculty numbers relative to administrators appears more gradual compared to some other institutions in the province, Selkirk College already reported a below-average ratio of full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty members—represented by the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators (FPSE)—to excluded administrative FTEs in 2010. Other institutions have simply caught up.

In response to the federal government's cap on international student study permits and a projected revenue loss of \$9 million, Selkirk College has begun reducing staff across all employee groups and ceased the intake of some programs. However, initial layoffs appear to have disproportionately affected unionized groups to date—including fac-



instance, between 2009 and 2014, UBC's professional administrative staff numbers increased by 737, while academic staff numbers grew by only 28 (HESA). Over the same time period, administrative costs rose over 40% at Capilano University (Newswire). This imbalance has prompted calls to address administrative spending rather than cutting academic programs to balance budgets.



ulty and support staff—while excluded positions have been minimally impacted. Should this pattern continue, this only serves to exacerbate administrative bloat and undermine the educational mandate of our institution.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

NEWS - EVENTS - MOVERS - SHAKERS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- » **Last summer**, Veronica Roberge and Summer Gauvreau did a multi-week nursing lab reorganization project. They visited other schools and explored how they organized their nursing labs. They travelled to College of the Rockies and UBCO and got rid of 40 large bags of garbage, streamlined the storage rooms, and created a map/legend of the storage space to help lab instructors find supplies. They submitted an abstract to WNRCSN and were chosen to do a poster presentation about the lab reorganization project which will take place May 21-23 at UBCO in Kelowna.
- » **As mentioned in Takaia's report**, EdCo will be accepting expressions of interest until May 5th for the seats available to SCFA members on Selkirk's Education Council. Please consider offering your voice to this important decision-making body.

EVENTS

- » **The SCFA will hold its Annual General Meeting** this Thursday from 4:30-6 PM in the Confluence Room at the Castlegar Visitors Centre, following by retirement celebration event at 6 PM (catered and licensed). RSVP [here](#).

- » **On May 8**, from 9-11:30 AM in S219, join Tyler Ballam, Pablo Pastor (TLC), Sarah James and Ken Laing (Library) for the following workshop: Addressing the Ethical Elephant in the Classroom: A Collaborative Approach to Developing a Course Policy on AI.
- » **The development of generative AI tools** using large language models (LLMs) continues to impact higher education and information seeking in profound ways. Whether you embrace or resist the use of this technology in your teaching practice, it is important to develop a common language of understanding to communicate with students about expectations around its ethical use. This workshop is suitable for educators across all disciplines and will consider some of the ethical aspects of AI, including concerns around labour, environmental impact, data bias, and copyright. Through the use of the AI Disclosure Statement framework, participants will leave equipped to draft an AI policy statement for their classroom that can nurture academic integrity and transparent conversation with their students.



» **Emily Millard Album Release**
Friday, May 9th @ 7PM
Shambhala Hall in Nelson
[Buy your tickets here](#)

On Friday, May 9th, SCFA member and acclaimed musician **Emily Millard** will be offering an intimate community performance for her highly anticipated fourth album, *Hazy Blue*. In *Hazy Blue*, Millard, known for her complex, layered storytelling, explores the many facets of love — from heartbreak to healing.

The album has already garnered significant national attention, with the single *The Cost of Love* climbing to #5 on the CBC Radio National Top 20 chart.

[Click here](#) for more information and tickets.

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On Stream

is the official newsletter of the SCFA, keeping members informed and connected. Whether you're new or a longtime member, this is your space to stay engaged.

Published monthly, we welcome submissions from all members—share your stories, photos, ideas, and achievements.

Submit your ideas to:

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