

# Colloquium

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**“There are a number of significant problems with taking a top-down, hierarchical approach to decision-making. The primary problem is when making decisions in this manner, educational leaders do not effectively use the expertise or knowledge of their faculty and staff. As a result, these decisions may not be the best decisions for students or for the institution” (Tom Weegar, 2013).**

Who is this Tom Weegar, and how can we get some of that faculty driven academic leadership?

Tom is our new AVP. His doctoral thesis notes that “leadership is an area of practice distinct from management.” Imagine that.

We agree that “community colleges do not use the full potential of the human social capital (the ‘brain base’) that exists within their organizations” (ibid). This theoretical abstraction is full of promise. Practice, however, is where things get difficult.

We fully support inclusive, faculty led academic leadership. Rest assured the faculty union fully agrees that “leadership is an area of practice distinct from management.”

**WELCOME TO  
FLEMING,  
TOM!**



## Office Space or "The Office" Space? Ann Hines

Over the past year I and other faculty from A-Wing have participated in meetings about the future of faculty space. Our feedback has not made it into the allocation of offices.

Faculty sense a tangible feeling of not being heard or valued, of not being understood in terms of our role. One faculty compared it to "The Office." But this is a comedy with a sense of game playing, fun, sales and meetings that are not taken seriously. The college feels like that sometimes.

The term "office" space generalizes what we do. What we actually do is ensure our students get the most out of our teaching. We take the time to listen to and understand their concerns. Those moments they don't feel comfortable asking a question in class and we are busy heading off to another class (we are work loaded as close to 44 hours as possible). We also know those times when students just need to talk about life, about struggles, sometimes their own and sometimes a roommate's. This happens in our "office space."



We are the first point of contact for most students. We are typically the people who get students to the counselling office when they are overwhelmed, struggling with course loads, depressed and sometimes suicidal. We sit with students for as long as it takes to facilitate them going to counselling services: when they are not safe, we walk with them and ensure they are taken care of. That is who we are and what we do. This requires a respectful workspace, not just an office space.

We are the ones who build rapport. This lends itself to students feeling comfortable to share those vulnerable pieces of their lives with us. This is a privilege, one that we are at risk of losing if students do not feel they can approach us in our workspace.

I am not alone in feeling tired of having to convince decision makers of the serious role we have both inside and outside of the classroom. Often learning takes place outside the classroom, during encounters in the hall or in our second learning space, our workspace. We know this. Decision makers seem to have forgotten. I know this a system issue and I am not blaming one person or group.

**The system has changed the perception of value from real quality education to numbers. Numbers of students, retention numbers, international student numbers, and numbers of faculty we can fit into an office space.** *Continued on next page*

**Continued:** *Office Space or "The Office" Space?* Ann Hines

Non-locking doors on our "offices," sound travel, meeting rooms that will be quickly utilized and unavailable (not to mention challenging to get to for a student who suddenly erupts into tears) and the appearance of hierarchy (fewer people per office if you hold "valued" roles) are a few of the design flaws in this current proposal.



This begins to set up more division as contract faculty (no matter how many hours you teach) share a space with 8 people to each computer station, full-time (non coordinators) share 4 people to a space and coordinators share 2 people per space. These are arbitrary rules set to an incomplete picture of our jobs that do NOT take into account what faculty in that committee voiced as concerns.

I have been blessed to spend most of my workspace over the past five year with an awesome colleague –Meredith Pilley. We have supported each other in many ways both academically and personally. I bet you have (or have had) someone too. We need to know each other to support each other. We work better and more effectively when we can count on the person next to us. This current system does not validate that. It doesn't consider workplace mental health and the need for faculty to support each other. The current system promotes more isolation as more and more of us will continue to work from home, which would mean potentially less availability for students and for each other.

We are not salespersons who require "office space" to secure a deal. We impact students' lives, and our students impact us. We need a workspace that reflects what we do and values how we do it. We need a workspace that supports student success –both academically and personally. Where we can also support each other.

I'm tired and I know I am not alone. It's hard to keep fighting one more battle. It's especially hard after this year. I know. I feel it too. Can I encourage you to continue to stand strong and to continue to stand in solidarity for quality education? We can't do this in isolation from each other, but together we can continue to make a difference.



## Fleming Faculty, Fleming Team

After the strike—a strange phrase, as our struggle continues—faculty stepped up to ensure students received a quality education. We stepped up again this term with the unexpected increase in enrollment. This exceptional demonstration of ongoing professionalism and dedication will be acknowledged by the college. The entire faculty team will be awarded the Fleming Team Award (thanks to Liz and Suzanne for the nomination).



## Education Vs. Adminstrivia

It is a rare privilege to have ethical work. We fight for quality education and professional autonomy when we are on strike, but also by advocating for faculty and students in committees, AUCC, Workload Monitoring Group, grievances, arbitrations and (impromptu and official) meetings with all levels of management and with College Council and provincial government.

One of the biggest obstacles is the corporatization of education. *The Chronicle for High Education* recently published [\*Are You In A BS Job? In Academe, You're Hardly Alone\*](#). While the focus is on universities, the parallels are uncanny: "In American universities from 1985 to 2005, the number of both students and faculty members went up by about half, the number of full-fledged administrative positions by 85 percent — and the number of administrative staff by 240 percent." One disgusted administrator explains why she quit:

*90% of the role is bullshit. Filling out the forms that the Faculty Dean sends so that s/he can write her strategy documents that get sent up the chain of command. Producing a confetti of paperwork as part of the auditing and monitoring of research activities and teaching activities. Producing plan after plan after 5-year-plan justifying why departments need to have the money and staff they already have. Doing bloody annual appraisals which go into a drawer never to be looked at again. And, in order to get these tasks done, as HoD, you ask your staff to help out. Bullshit proliferation.*

## Private Colleges?

The *Globe and Mail* went the Freedom of Information route to reveal that "[Deals Between Public Private Colleges Pose Unacceptable Risks Students, Ontario Report Says.](#)"

"Partnerships between public and private colleges, which have brought thousands of new international students to Ontario, carried unacceptable risks to the students, the province and the quality of education, says a report for the provincial government that led to a moratorium on the programs" notes the *Globe*.

Six Ontario colleges partnered with private for-profit colleges to grant diplomas from ten GTA locations owned by private colleges that pocket most of fees and kick back "as little as 10 to 15 percent" to the colleges. International students attending private career colleges were not allowed to work in Canada. Partnering with a public college, however, makes international students eligible to work here, improving their chances of settling in Canada permanently.

This led to the enrollment of almost 5,000 extra international students and carries "significant risks" as "the government does not have the tools to monitor the quality of the student experience at the private-branch campuses, including whether they are meeting academic standards" (and they monitor what happens when academic standards meet "unsustainable" [Tony Tilly] international student over-enrollment at our public college?).

The article notes the elephant in the neoliberal room. Winding up the public-private boondoggle means looking at public funding and "examining why colleges receive less money for every student than universities. Colleges receive \$2000 less for every student than universities." We urge senior management to lobby for fair funding to support quality public education.

## Health and Safety

The OPSEU Disability Rights Caucus (DRC) recognizes that **psychosocial factors** and not just physical causes contribute to workplace hazards. Psychosocial factors include precarious work, harassment, discrimination, high job demands and bullying in the workplace.

All of these factors are preventable: the injuries suffered can leave a worker disabled for life. According to the mental health commission, by age 40, one of every two people will have or have had a mental health condition. 30 percent of all short-term and long-term disability claims are for mental health issues.

April 28th is the National Day of Mourning for workers who have been killed, injured or become ill because of their work. We continue to struggle for better workplace benefits, improved health and safety, and raised awareness to prevent further deaths, injuries and diseases, including invisible injuries. We must ensure that mental health injuries are honoured and counted.

## Why I am Running for Steward

I believe in quality post secondary education. I want my voice to support fairness for faculty as they seek to deliver excellent post secondary learning. Having the freedom to decide how it is delivered and how it is assessed will continue to be points that I will passionately speak out about and fight for—*Mary Lou Lummiss*

I am running for re-election as a steward because I believe that what we do in our role is important. We inform, support, and encourage our brothers and sisters to advocate for themselves and others. Our local continually strives for positive change at Fleming, and I feel fortunate to be a part of that. And that's the truth!—*Kari Draker-Fortis*

Being a steward makes me feel like I am contributing in making Fleming a positive workplace for faculty. My focus is usually on helping faculty stand up to workplace injustices through the grievance process—*Audrey Healy*



I very much appreciate the opportunities provided me as a union steward to do just that...be a steward, and to consult my constituents and advance that voice to the union executive and various union / college sub-committees. Respectfully and with thanks—*Stuart "the Steward" Keenan*

I'll run for re-election because I appreciate the opportunity being a steward gives me to engage and support my fellow faculty members. I'm always inspired by the amazing people I am lucky enough to be surrounded by as part of my work. Being a part of safeguarding access to a fair and just workplace is an awesome role I feel fortunate to fulfill—*Victoria Maystruk*

Being a steward allows me to fight for quality education and to collaborate with others struggling against precarity and injustice in (and beyond) our workplace. This is crucial work, and those who do it inspire me—*George Fogarasi*

I am running for steward Local 352 because I believe in social justice and I enjoy connecting with all different faculty from a variety of programs. I believe that we are facing challenging times at Fleming and in the college system, and I would like to be a part of creating change in our workplace for the better—*Amanda Mushynsky*

I am running for union steward because I work with a group of dynamic people who are hard working, tenacious, optimistic, and at the end of the day, have your back—*Nancy Rishor*

I am running for steward because I believe in a fair process. I believe in doing the right thing, even when times can be difficult and turbulent. In solidarity, we are all brothers and sisters—*Karen Bateman*

## The Gig Economy: Fight Back

In "[‘The Gig Economy’ is the New Term for Serfdom](#)," Christopher Hedges takes an unflinching look at precarity. In New York City, ride-hailing companies Uber and Lyft have undercut the already difficult lives of cab drivers. Four of them have committed suicides in four months. One of them had been working 100 to 120 hours a week.

Workers once enjoyed full-time jobs and decent pay. Why? Because unions fought for this, and there was public support. Now we are in the thrall of our iPhones and disruption. Here's how this plays out: in Detroit, an Uber driver makes \$8.77 an hour. The former CEO of Uber is worth over four billion dollars.

When we accept isolation, Mark Zuckerberg sells our personal data and is worth 64 billion dollars. The more temp we are, the more rich CEO's are. The world has more wealth than ever, but the "logic" of austerity filtered through the likes of Donald Trump and Doug Ford steers our attention elsewhere as the wealth flows ever upward at an ever faster rate.

When we organize and come together, we can put a dent in things and get some justice. Remember the solidarity of the strike, how the more they weaseled the stronger we got? School teachers in West Virginia—this is the land of coal and Trump—defied their union (!) and went on a wildcat strike for nine days.

### They won.

They won a 5% raise for all state employees (and a commission focusing on healthcare).

Striking is but one (powerful) way to resist corporate greed. Many countries and cities have banned Uber. None of these things (gig economy, precarity, Uber) is inevitable. They just make it feel that way.

Those of us with a collective agreement fought hard for it and continue to fight for it. Between negotiations, it is strengthened by making sure it is adhered to. Therefore, when a manager ignores it or pushes the envelope, talk to a steward and make sure you are treated fairly.

Otherwise, it's all Uber for education.

Oklahoma teachers made huge gains after a 9 day strike in April. Legislators boosted education funding by \$479 million. Teachers won pay raises for support staff and secured \$70 million for classroom supplies. Teachers' pay went up by an average of \$6,100, the largest raise in state history.