

WLUFA MATTERS

AMPLIFYING UNITY

A Fond Farewell After Four Years

By Rob Kristofferson

As I conclude my final year as President of WLUFA, I want to take a moment to reflect—and to offer my sincere thanks to each of you for the privilege of serving this exceptional community over the past four years. It has been an honour and a learning experience, filled with both challenges and deeply rewarding moments.

This past academic year has been one of transition, preparation, and collaboration. A major focus has been laying the groundwork for our upcoming round of Contract Faculty bargaining, with our current agreement set to expire at the end of August 2025. I'm pleased to share that Anne-Marie Allison and Terry Poirier have been appointed as Co-Chief Negotiators. Alongside a dedicated Negotiating Team and with the support of our Engagement & Mobilization Team (EMT) led by Ryan Ladner, we are well positioned to approach this next phase with strength and solidarity. Clear and consistent communication between the team and our Membership will be a priority throughout the process.

Equally significant this year has been our continued work toward joining the University Pension Plan (UPP), a move that reflects a long-term investment in the financial well-being of our Members. Thanks to the efforts of our Pension Committee—David Monod, Azim Essaji, and Sheila McKee-Protopapas—as well as our legal team and Executive Director Terry Poirier, we're on track to transition into the UPP on January 1, 2026. I'm especially proud that we've also created a pathway for our valued WLUFA office staff to join the plan, ensuring more equitable benefits across our team.

Behind the scenes, our office continues to be a true engine of the Association. From supporting Members through representation and organizing training sessions to building solidarity across campuses and the province, the list of accomplishments is long. The team helped launch events in partnership with OSSTF, OPSEU, CUPE, and WUSA, and collaborated with the students' union on initiatives supporting students in need.

On top of that, they've worked to digitize and archive our Collective Bargaining and Grievance records, improve data security via Union365, and coordinate social events like the Spring Socials, Pride Event, and our Solidarity BBQ. A heartfelt thanks goes out to Larissa Brocklebank, Linda Watson, Ryan Ladner, and Terry Poirier for their dedication, warmth, and tireless work. I will truly miss working with you all every day.

At the provincial level, the conversation around postsecondary funding continues to dominate. As I noted last year, chronic underfunding has affected our ability to teach, research, and contribute meaningfully to our institutions—and this year has only intensified those pressures. WLUFA continued its advocacy through OCUFA, participating in campaigns, media efforts, and Queen's Park meetings. One such moment that stood out was meeting with Minister Nolan Quinn to directly address these concerns—our first meeting with a sitting MCU Minister in some time.

While there may be some glimmers of hope in promised STEM funding, ad hoc injections of money are no substitute for sustained, predictable support for our universities.

I plan to continue the push for financial sustainability for Ontario's universities when I take up the role as President of OCUFA starting this July 1st.

Our internal committees also continued essential work. The Committee on University Finances released its third annual financial review of Laurier's fiscal health, providing important insight and accountability. Committees are



Rob Kristofferson, Professor, Social & Environmental Justice, History; President, Wilfrid Laurier University Faculty Association.

active spaces for discussion and faculty representation, keeping the principles of collegial governance alive and well. I want to thank all involved for their commitment and engagement.

One initiative that has been especially meaningful to me has been our effort to enhance representation across the union through potential constitutional reforms. Following direction from an Membership meeting, a large working group was struck to explore ways of broadening Member participation. With input from across all faculties and the Library during winter consultations, they are now shaping proposed changes that seek to better reflect the voices of our diverse Membership.

Much of the work of the presidency isn't always visible. Confidential advocacy on behalf of individual Members has taken up a considerable part of my time—and while I can't go into detail, I want you to know this work has been a core part of my commitment to fairness, equity, and respect for all our Members.

Continued on page 2...



Photo: Rob Kristofferson at CAUT Council, 2023.

...Continued from page 1.

To our Executive team—Anne-Marie Allison, Pam Bryden, Kimberly Ellis-Hale, Jim Gerlach, Bruce Gillespie, Stacey Hannem, Mary Kelly, Christine Neill, Marcia Oliver, Zilin Wang.—thank you for your collaboration and thoughtful leadership. I'd especially like to thank Bruce Gillespie, who stepped in as Acting President when I had to take leave to attend to a family matter. Bruce's leadership has been steady and gracious, and I know WLUFA is in excellent hands.

Finally, I want to thank you, our Membership. Over these four years, I've made it a priority to listen, to learn, and to lead with transparency and care. I have gotten to know many of you in the process, and for that I am deeply grateful. In a multi-campus, dual bargaining unit organization like ours, it hasn't always been easy to find consensus—but it's always been worth the effort. I've done my best to advocate for what matters most to you, and to help build a stronger, more connected Association.

With deep gratitude and best wishes,

Rob Kristofferson
Outgoing President, WLUFA
Incoming President, OCUFA

In This Issue:

- New President's Welcome
- Building From Within
- Why You Need a Union Rep
- A Celebration with a Sobering Side
- Stories That Shape Us
- A Day in the Life at Laurier's New Milton Campus

New President's Welcome: Your Involvement is Key

By Bruce Gillespie



Bruce Gillespie; Acting WLUFA President and President-Elect. He is an associate professor in the User Experience Design Program, at the Brantford campus, and a Laurier Teaching Fellow.

I'm honoured to become the next President of WLUFA. Admittedly, it wasn't a role that was on my career bingo card until recently. Despite having worked at Laurier since 2008, I didn't become actively involved with the Association until a few years ago. Even then, I wasn't sure I had much to contribute—I'd never taken part in contract negotiations or represented the Association externally at our provincial or national associations (OCUFA and CAUT). Besides, everyone on the Executive seemed highly capable and experienced, so what could I bring to the table?

At the same time, it was the height of the pandemic lockdowns and I was at home with more time on my hands than usual, so when someone asked me to run for a seat on the Executive, I agreed and hoped at least that my energy and willingness to learn could be put to good use. I was warmly welcomed by the rest of the Executive, many of whom had been contributing to WLUFA for years, and I was buoyed that they were as willing to share their deep institutional knowledge of Laurier with me as they were to entertain my naïve questions and different perspectives and ideas.

Within a few short years, my time spent contributing to WLUFA has become one of the most rewarding parts of my academic career. It's provided me with a unique opportunity to meet and collaborate with faculty Members across different programs and campuses whom I'd never have met otherwise.

I share this story because I think it's a common experience. I hear from a lot of colleagues who say they'd like to become more involved with WLUFA but worry they aren't qualified or experienced enough or don't have the time. My response to them is always the same: do it anyway! You won't regret it. The vitality of the Association depends on engaging new Members and learning from each

other, embracing fresh perspectives on the way things have always been done.

So, I encourage you to get involved. There are lots of ways to do so. WLUFA has a number of committees and makes appointments to many university committees. Some meet monthly, while others only meet once or twice a year; there's a range of expectations, so you can start small with a limited-time commitment. Certain roles come with course releases, stipends, or honorariums, and can also count toward your service. We also offer ongoing training opportunities to learn more about collective bargaining and becoming a grievance officer, and we can connect you to other opportunities through OCUFA and CAUT, where you can learn with and from colleagues at other universities across the country. This year, we'll need to mobilize faculty in support of contract negotiations—bargaining is set to begin for Contract Faculty this summer and Full-time Faculty later this fall.

WLUFA is enriched by your time, your energy, and your involvement. Whether you're bringing a unique set of skills to the table or want to learn something new, we want to hear from you! We'll be sending out our annual call to staff committees later this spring.

Continued on page 3...

...Continued from page 2

In the meantime, feel free to get in touch with me or Membership Engagement and Communication Officer Ryan Ladner if you'd like to get involved—we'll find a role that fits your time and interests.

Finally, I'd like to take a moment to recognize our outgoing President, Rob Kristofferson, for his leadership over the past four years, as well as his first one-year term in 2014. We've all benefited from his thoughtful guidance and the insights he's brought to the role as a labour historian. I can personally attest to his work in making WLUFA more welcoming and collegial, and in expanding our focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion—work I hope to continue. While we'll miss him, I'm reassured that he will serve as WLUFA Past President on our Executive and look out for all Ontario faculty as the incoming President of OCUFA this summer.

KEEP IN TOUCH



EDITORIAL POLICY

The views expressed in WLUFA Matters are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect those of WLUFA, or the editor, except where such views are clearly indicated. The editor reserves the right to edit and reformat submissions to the newsletter. All contributions to the newsletter have been edited for content and length by the editor with approval from each contributor. It is the policy of WLUFA Matters to encourage discussion and debate that is respectful. We do not publish or print ad hominem attacks on fellow Members, nor any submission that might be deemed libelous or discriminatory. Submissions to the newsletter must include name and contact information. Name(s) may be withheld upon request.

Terry's Corner: Building From Within

By Terry Poirier

One of the core purposes of any Association is to protect its members' rights in the workplace—to ensure fair treatment, safety, and respect. Just as important, WLUFA exists so we can empower one another, not only when external challenges arise, but also as we work to build a stronger, more inclusive, and more engaged union from within.

We've all heard the saying "There's no 'I' in team," yet there is an "I" in "union"—and two in "Association." That reminds us that while we act collectively, each of us plays a vital role. WLUFA is more than a service to call in a crisis; it is a living, evolving community shaped by your voices, your actions, and your ongoing commitment. To borrow a familiar phrase: ask not what your union can do for you, but what you can do for your union.

WLUFA flourishes when Members participate consistently and collaboratively. Through our committees, initiatives, and leadership opportunities, we improve working conditions, advance equity, address new challenges, and enrich the academic life of this university. Every volunteer hour—whether preparing a report, mentoring a colleague, or attending a meeting—adds to the collective good.

Committees, in particular, are the engine of our Association.

Over the years they have driven equity measures, strengthened health-and-safety protocols, and secured benefits that affect every Member. These groups are more than administrative units; they are spaces for leadership development, collective action, and Member-driven policy work. Active participation in committees ensures that ideas and concerns are heard where decisions are made, and it deepens the trust that keeps us moving forward together.

To keep committees effective and welcoming, we rely on two essentials: transparency and alignment with WLUFA's broader goals. From time to time, questions surface—about mandates, resources, or how decisions are communicated. That's natural in a busy Association.



Terry Poirier, Executive Director of WLUFA. He is currently one of the Co-Chief Negotiators for Contract Faculty and Part-Time Librarians.

A quick conversation with an Executive Committee member, WLUFA staff member, or a joint meeting can clarify expectations and keep everyone pulling in the same direction.

When we occasionally work in isolation or miss key checkpoints, our collective voice can lose some of its strength. By contrast, every time you step forward—ask a question, raise a suggestion, join a committee, or lend a hand—you make WLUFA more resilient and more responsive.

Whether you're a long-time unionist or brand-new to WLUFA, I invite you to deepen your engagement. Join a committee, share your ideas, reach out to a colleague. Together we not only defend our rights; we shape the inclusive academic community we all want to belong to.

Seeking Contributors

The editorial staff of WLUFA Matters are looking for content. We are looking to highlight matters pertaining to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Indigeneity, committee contributions, research accomplishments and much more. If you would like to share your academic experiences with all your peers, please contact Ryan Ladner at rladner@wlu.ca to submit your content or provide feedback about this publication.

Empower Yourself: Why You Need a Union Rep

By Ryan Ladner

Imagine you receive an unexpected email from your Dean to discuss a student complaint, or a notice from the Office of Human Rights and Conflict Management (OHRCM) about a potential issue under Policy 6.1 about harassment or discrimination. The meeting is scheduled soon, and you're unsure what it's really about. What should you do?

The short answer: ask for an Association representative, commonly referred to as a union rep.

Under Article 27.5 of the Full-time and Professional Librarians Collective Agreement and Article 23.5 of the Contract Faculty and Part-time Librarians Collective Agreement, every Member has the right to bring representation to any meeting related to disputes or concerns about their employment. At Laurier, that "representative" is typically one of our Grievance Officers (GOs), and in some cases, the WLUFA President or Executive Director who can step in to investigate, interpret, and support. These Officers are trained to understand the Collective Agreements (CAs) and labour laws, and they can advise you on how to proceed.

Asking for an Association representative cannot be held against you—Section 74 of Ontario's Employment Standards Act, 2000 clearly states there can be no reprisal for seeking support. This protection applies whether you're a Contract Faculty Member worried about future hiring or a Full-time Faculty Member concerned about tenure. Simply put, bringing an Association representative to a meeting cannot jeopardize your career.

Ideally, the Administration should let you know if a meeting might involve disciplinary action so you can bring a representative. Sometimes, this notice is given offhand, so it's important to understand your rights. If you realize mid-meeting that you're uncomfortable with the direction of the discussion, it's perfectly acceptable to ask for the meeting to be paused or rescheduled until you can have an Association representative present.

What if the notice for a meeting is very short? You might worry you can't find someone in time.

Don't panic. If the Association can't secure a Grievance Officer right away, WLUFA will work with the Administration to reschedule. This happens regularly, and short notice doesn't invalidate your right to representation.

If you feel unsure, don't go it alone. Call or text WLUFA at 1-519-497-4880 during regular business hours or email Linda Watson at lwatson@wlu.ca. Your focus should be on your teaching, research, and the overall academic experience—not worrying about the technicalities of a meeting.

Your rights matter. By knowing them, you protect your well-being, your professional future, and the integrity of the academic community.



Contract Faculty Century Club: A Celebration with a Sobering Side

By Ryan Ladner

In the world of academic life, it's common to see clubs and associations commemorate achievements—research breakthroughs, prestigious awards, or milestone publications. The WLUFA Contract Faculty Century Club, however, carries a distinctly bittersweet significance. Membership requires teaching 100 courses at Laurier—no small feat, yet one that draws attention to the precarious conditions under which many Contract Faculty work.

To recognize this milestone, WLUFA honours these dedicated educators with a brass medal and a modest honorarium, shining a light on the considerable impact they make in classrooms across the university. This tribute also serves as a stark reminder: for those who have surpassed 100 (or even 200) courses taught, there remains little in the way of true job security. The very need to create a "Century Club" highlights systemic issues in how Contract Faculty are hired, compensated, and supported.

Continued on page 5...

...Continued from page 4

At the same time, it's important to celebrate the commitment of instructors who guide countless students, often juggling multiple contracts at different institutions, each term. Their devotion to teaching is undeniable, and their contributions are integral to the university's success. Yet, many who join the Century Club do so with mixed emotions. Accepting a medal that commemorates 100 taught courses can also be a symbol of frustration—that such longevity doesn't guarantee a stable career path.

By presenting these awards, WLUFAs aims not just to acknowledge hard work, but also to spark awareness and advocacy. The hope is that, one day soon, faculty who reach these impressive milestones will find themselves in permanent positions, rather than cycling through contract after contract. We believe that the Century Club can—and should—become an emblem of change.

If you'd like to learn more about our new Century Club inductees and the challenges facing Contract Faculty, visit the [WLUFAs website](#). There, you'll find personal stories that highlight the commitment, resilience, and passion these educators bring to Laurier. Let these medals serve as both a celebration of dedication and a call to action—reminding us that real recognition must go hand in hand with meaningful, long-term security in academia.

Here are this year's inductees to the Century Club:

100 Courses Taught	150 Courses Taught	200 Courses Taught
Nick Garside	Kimberly Ellis-Hale	Michael Manley
Cristina Gheorghiu	Kathy Foxall	
Jason Robinson	Deborah Glebe	
	Marinel Mandres	
	Alan Marshall	
	Angela Trimarchi	
	Tyler Wunder	

Milestone Recognition: Michael Manley—First 200-Course Inductee

WLUFAs recognizes Michael Manley (Department of Sociology) as the first Century Club member to surpass 200 courses taught—an achievement that highlights both his extraordinary dedication and the ongoing precarity of contract appointments. Active at the University since the mid-1980s, Manley has guided thousands of students through core subjects in crime, deviance, mental illness, and social theory, while shaping the online-learning landscape.

By presenting the inaugural 200-Course Medal, WLUFAs acknowledges Manley's decades of commitment—while calling attention to the fact that such a landmark still comes without the stability of a permanent position. To read Manley's bio please click this link to [WLUFAs website](#).



Photo Credit: Laurier Archives and Special Collections, Sept. 5, 1986.

Honouring Our 2025 Retirees

As this academic year draws to a close, the Wilfrid Laurier University Faculty Association celebrates the remarkable careers of colleagues entering retirement. Their dedication to teaching, research, and service has shaped our university community. Many were honoured at the recent Spring Social—thank you to everyone who attended.

For those who'd like to learn more, the [full biographies](#) are available on the WLUFAs website.

- **Leonard Friesen** — History
- **Debra Langan** — Criminology
- **Tanis MacDonald** — English & Film Studies
- **David Monod** — History · *Former WLUFAs President*
- **Edmund Pries** — Global Studies
- **Tao Zeng** — Accounting, Lazaridis School of Business & Economics
- **Steffen Ziss** — Economics, Lazaridis School of Business & Economics

WLUFAs extends heartfelt gratitude to Friesen, Langan, MacDonald, Monod, Pries, Zeng, and Ziss for their outstanding contributions to Wilfrid Laurier University. We wish them joy and fulfillment in retirement and look forward to their continued connection with the WLUFAs community.



Photos by Ryan Ladner

Stories That Shape Us: Mental Health, Precarity, and Solidarity

By Ryan Ladner



On March 19, the Robert Langen Art Gallery became a living anthology for Stories That Shape Us, a midday drop-in curated by Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Faculty Colleague Sobia Iqbal with Mona Elayyan and Suzanne Luke.

The program invited four storytellers—Sydney Keedwell, Fatima Garzan, Hadi Rasooli, and Chris Panylo—to trace the moments that reshaped their lives. Attendees first heard from all four panelists, then could book one-on-one time with a storyteller to ask questions, compare experiences, and—above all—be reminded that no one’s struggle is theirs alone.

I booked time with Panylo, a former undercover police officer who has taught as a Contract Faculty Member in Criminology and in Laurier’s United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime certificate since 2017.

Because I’d heard Panylo’s opening remarks, my first question was how the stresses of contract teaching compare with those of policing. “Anxiety is anxiety; it’s all relative,” he replied. The difference, he argued, lies in the safety net—or lack of one. “In 2017, my primary income was teaching, and I didn’t have benefits for the first few years because I didn’t teach enough.”

For Contract Faculty living term-to-term, the cost of professional help often puts care out of reach.

But just because you can’t afford benefits and help doesn’t mean you don’t need them.

I’ve taught courses with 200-plus students. When you’re the only instructor, you’re maxed out

Panylo’s experiences reveal another blind spot. “When I share my story [of work related anxiety] in class, students often respond with theirs. I know I’m responsible for directing them to Student Services,” he said, “but during onboarding, no one told me how to handle students in crisis.” His appeal is straightforward: embed mental-health literacy and trauma-informed training into every instructor’s orientation. “Students deserve a gentler landing,” he urged, as do precariously employed faculty.

The discussion closed with Panylo’s final encouragement: “If you need help, ask. I know how heavy that phone is, but never underestimate the void you would leave. Most people want you to come to them for help; they just don’t know until you tell them.”



Photo of Christopher Panylo and Sobia Iqbal.



SOCIAL TIME WITH WLUFA



A Day in the Life at Laurier's New Milton Campus: Spotlight on Saiqa Aleem

By Ryan Ladner



Saiqa Aleem is an assistant professor in the Physics and Computer Science Department.

Each university campus develops its own identity—a blend of culture, community, and support structures that shape daily life for faculty and students alike. With the Milton Campus still in its infancy, WLUFA set out to learn what work looks like on the ground, especially around working conditions, resources, and the evolving sense of community.

"I am one of the two tenure-track Faculty Members hired for the Milton Campus, and this is also my first year at Laurier," says Saiqa Aleem, PhD, P. Eng. (she/her). "Selecting between the Brantford and Milton campuses was difficult during the interview process.

"A new campus brings its own challenges and opportunities. I chose to focus on the opportunities associated with this appointment, selecting the Milton campus as my first choice. Key motivators were helping shape a new software-engineering program and campus culture."

A typical day is familiar yet uniquely Milton.

"My typical day starts with checking emails and responding to student and administrative inquiries. After that, I prepare lectures and review class plans. Following the lecture, I work on my ongoing research projects and perform some administrative duties," she explains. Office hours, virtual collaboration with departmental colleagues, and campus-wide activities round out her schedule. "Sometimes, I take on additional responsibilities that might not be expected at the Waterloo campus, such as engaging with the recruitment team and campus team discussions."

The campus's small scale has upsides and drawbacks. "Smaller class sizes enable greater personalized student engagement," she notes, highlighting the opportunity for deeper connections with faculty and peers. While the current faculty structure can sometimes feel limiting, the administration is aware of these growing pains.

Amenities are gradually developing: "There are not many options for meals and coffee; only one café, Goose Café, opened in late October. Sometimes, I get my lunch and coffee from there." Space and acoustics are also present concerns. "The campus could benefit from improvements in space utilization and sound insulation." That said, management has acknowledged these limitations and is actively working to expand both the physical space and the range of services available, with a strong commitment to supporting the student experience as the campus evolves.

Communication can be another hurdle. "Other challenges include finding answers to simple questions as the new and only Faculty Member. Connecting with others in my department took some time, primarily virtually. I always rely on emails for department-related queries, even for small information." With few colleagues on-site, everyday problem-solving can feel slow and remote.

While faculty appreciate the hands-on efforts of the local campus manager, support is still constrained by Milton's limited size. Aleem notes that management "has played a significant role by scheduling various activities for students and engaging them," and the manager is often the first point of contact when issues arise. Yet many resources—especially professional-development workshops—are still hosted exclusively in Waterloo or Brantford, she adds, making attendance "sometimes difficult" for Milton faculty.

Looking ahead, Aleem would like to see better physical space, more student amenities, and labs equipped with computers so Milton can mirror the student-life experience of Laurier's larger campuses. She also underscores the role of advocacy:

"Strong union support will be essential to ensuring that Milton is not merely seen as an extension or temporary outpost but as a fully resourced and integral part of the institution."

Milton's early stage offers faculty the rare chance to build something distinctive, even as they navigate the growing pains of a fledgling campus. WLUFA is committed to supporting Aleem and her colleagues on that journey—working to ensure that every Member, on every campus, has the resources and representation needed to thrive.



Photo by Ryan Ladner

**Thanks for reading this issue of WLUFA Matters.
Stay tuned for our next issue this Fall 2025!**