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Fédération nationale
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du Québec



Special
50th anniversary

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On December 18, 1968, the National Assembly took “a highly significant action for the development of the educational system and the progress of Québec society as a whole”¹ when it passed the Act respecting the *Université du Québec*. This was the green light enabling the UQ’s first constituent universities, in Montréal, Chicoutimi and Trois-Rivières, to welcome their first cohort of students the following September. From the start, the *Université du Québec* was unlike other universities: it was public, it was secular, and it consisted of a network of regional institutions. Advocates of this novel idea of the university lacked neither vision nor boldness

as they designed a new higher education system based on the recommendations of the Parent report, one that was completely different from the old one.

The FNEEQ is pleased and proud to celebrate the *Université du Québec*’s 50th anniversary. Nearly 4,700 of our members work for UQ in seven of its ten constituent institutions (ETS, TELUQ, UQAC, UQAM, UQAR, UQAT, UQO); they belong to eight unions affiliated with our Federation. The contribution of lecturers and tutors to the *Université du Québec*’s mission, in its various aspects, has been both substantial and essential. Over the past 50 years, the development of Québec society has been largely sustained by the work of our members – teachers who make access to knowledge and culture a reality on a daily basis, while devoting themselves to innovation, creation and the quality of education.

In this special issue of *Carnets*, our unions address a number of topical issues, including regional development, changes and challenges in the world of teaching, accessibility and distance learning. It is clear that new challenges – democratic, environmental and digital, among others – will usher in changes in education, in both physical and conceptual terms.

The *Coalition Avenir Québec*, which has recently taken power, said very little during the election campaign about higher education, other than its intention to tie the Cégeps and universities more closely to the private sector. The FNEEQ has long been opposed to subordinating education to the market and its spreading excesses. We intend to remind Jean-François Roberge, our 28th Minister of Education in 50 years (what a turnover rate!), of his promise to consult the higher education and teaching communities and involve them in the decisions that will affect them.

In the meantime, happy birthday to the *Université du Québec* system and congratulations to all members who work in it!

Caroline Turmel

1 Statement by Premier Jean-Jacques Bertrand, Débats de l’Assemblée législative du Québec, third session, Vol. 7, No. 101, December 9, 1968, p. 4656 (our translation).

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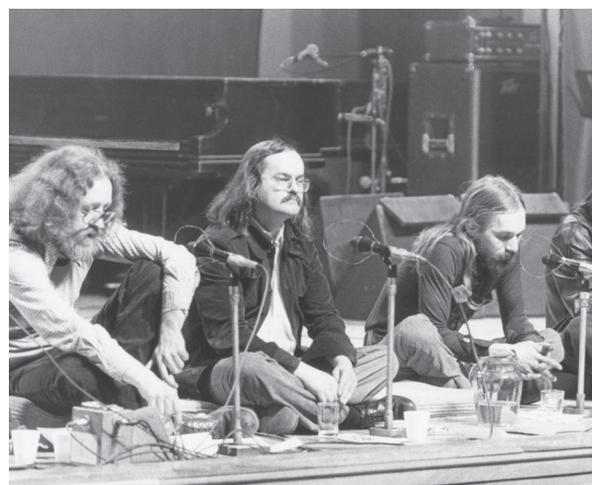
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(UQAM) Student strike against tuition fees enters fourth week, 1973. (Source : Réseau : le magazine de l'Université du Québec, Vol. 4, No. 6 (February 1973), pp. 4-5. (Photo credit: Yanick Villedieu / Université du Québec archives)



(UQTR) Low tech but high spirits at UQTR student radio station (December 1970?). (Source : Réseau : bulletin d'information de l'Université du Québec, Vol. 2, No. 8 (December 9 to January 5, 1971), p. 5. (Photo credit: Yanick Villedieu / Université du Québec archives)



(UQAM) Conference on the counter-culture at UQAM (circa 1970). Second from left: Pierre Vallières. (Photographer unknown / Université du Québec archives)



(UQAM) Back to school at UQAM (September 1974?). (Source : Réseau : le magazine de l'Université du Québec, Vol. 6, No. 1 (September 1974), p. 7. (Photo credit for both photos: Alain Giguère, UQAM audio-visual / Université du Québec archives)

50th anniversary of the *Université du Québec*

Institution's success remains incomplete as lecturers continue distance education



Lecturers employed by the various institutions that make up the *Université du Québec* (UQ) are joining in celebrating its 50th anniversary. They acknowledge the importance of the UQ system, even though they are not given the recognition they deserve within its institutions. They are still fighting to take their rightful place in university structures and to be fairly paid.

Richard Bousquet
Vice-president regroupement université

The UQ was created on December 18, 1968, to “increase the educational level of Québec’s population through increased accessibility, to contribute to the development of Québec’s regions, and to ensure Québec’s scientific development.”¹

Universities in Montréal (UQAM), Trois-Rivières (UQTR) and Chicoutimi (UQAC), along with the École nationale d’administration publique (ENAP) and the Institut national de la recherche scientifique (INRS), were established in 1969. The *Université du Québec* à Rimouski (UQAR) joined the network in 1974, as did the École de technologie supérieure. 1981 saw the arrival of the *Université du Québec* à Hull (UQAH), known as UQO since 2002, and the *Université du Québec* en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT) joined in 1983.

Today, over 102,000 students are registered in the 1,000 programs offered by the system’s institutions. According to the UQ website, in 2016-2017 approximately 7,300 professors – including close to 4,300 lecturers – and over 4,200 regular employees worked day by day to accomplish the universities’ teaching and research mission. Over 700,000 degrees have been granted since the UQ was founded.

A defective founding formula

The UQ system has successfully carried out the first two elements of its mission. But at what cost? Fewer than 50% of its undergraduate students are registered in a full-time program, yet universities are funded on a basis that assigns little importance to part-time students. Universities in Québec’s regions must meet the needs of first-generation students

whose parents do not have a university degree, and it is known that students in this category are more likely to study part-time.

Under the funding formula for universities, tuition fees for foreign students have been deregulated, and UQ’s universities are now being encouraged to join in the competition to attract these students in order to offset labour shortages. However, unless they can clone Boucar Diouf, the institutions in the UQ system will not be able to compete with the chartered universities, and even less with English-language institutions.

The government’s approach is accentuating the two-tier structure of the Québec university system and making it more difficult for the UQ to carry out its mission.

Lecturers unite

The first lecturers’ unions appeared close to a decade after the creation of their respective institutions. When the Syndicat des chargées et chargés de cours de l’UQAM (the first union for precarious workers in Québec) was founded, a lecturer teaching one course was paid approximately \$1,200. Today, the average pay for a course is seven times higher, but it is still \$3,000 less than what professors are paid for the same workload, and a lecturer’s average salary barely exceeds \$20,000 a year. The universities in the UQ system – like other universities – are keeping lecturers in a precarious state.

The rights and powers of the *Université du Québec* are exercised by the board of governors, the system’s highest decision-making body. It includes three

1 <https://www.ledevoir.com/societe/education/528468/l-universite-du-quebec-souffle-ses-50-bougies>.

faculty members from constituent universities, schools, and research institutes; two students from those institutions; seven persons from social, cultural, business and working communities; and one person from the Cégep teaching community. Three professors and three students also sit on the academic council.

What about sessional lecturers? The law creating the *Université du Québec* did not provide any role for them, and the current president of the institution, Johanne Jean – who met with a FNEEQ delegation in October – has no plans to seek any change to the law. At most, at our request, she might consider informal observer status.

The situation is better in the system’s constituent institutions. Lecturers generally have seats on their board of governors, academic committee and undergraduate module councils, but not at the departmental assemblies where the qualifications required of lecturers are discussed.

Distance education

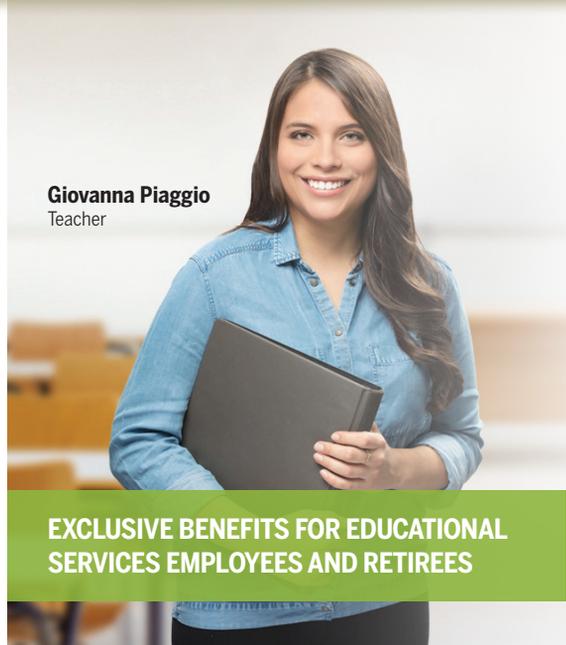
In 1972, the Télé-université was established to increase access to higher education by developing

a distance education model – one that has demonstrated its value and led to the granting of over 30,000 degrees. This model, which largely relies on tutors to supervise students, is now being challenged by the administrations of the UQ and its TÉLUQ constituent, which wants to sacrifice tutors on the altar of cost-effectiveness. The government criticized the introduction of outsourcing in higher education but the creation of positions for low-paid contract professors, along with decreased student supervision, are pushing tutors out the door and towards a strike.

Still looking for respect

Over the past 50 years, the *Université du Québec* system has helped raise educational levels in Québec and improve access to higher education. It has supported the development of Québec regions and contributed to Québec’s scientific development, even if it has always had to fight for adequate funding. Lecturers have played central role in these achievements – without ever gaining the respect and working conditions they deserve. ■

Four of the ten major discoveries of the year 2000 in Québec (according to Québec Science) came from the *Université du Québec* – a dazzling testimonial to the quality of the research conducted within its wall, as the UQ website points out. Many lecturers also carry out research and creative work, without being paid to do so – even though more and more university administrations are acknowledging this kind of work in collective agreements. But we’re told by the UQ administration that there isn’t enough research funding for professors and lecturers’ contracts are too short.



Giovanna Piaggio
Teacher

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1968 - 2018: A sea change in university teaching



The academic world has been turned upside down in the last 50 years. In-class teaching has been transformed. Blackboards filled with chalk at the end of a three-hour class have given way to slides, videos and dynamic questionnaires on giant screens. In 2018, no one would dream of lecturing for three hours without visual aids. But in the 1960s that was the norm, with the exception of the odd overhead slide.

Marie-Josée Bourget
Syndicat des chargées et chargés de l'Université du Québec en Outaouais (SCCC-UQO)

Course schedules were once limited to weekdays with occasional evening classes. Now they stretch from Monday through Sunday. Back-and-forth emails have replaced face-to-face meetings.

Textbooks are now supplemented by readings posted on electronic platforms of all kinds and visual and auditory materials. Notebooks have yielded to computers, which can be used for much more than taking notes; teachers are vying for attention with the Web.

The average age of the student body has increased and the generational mix has created more challenges for teachers. Imagine an 18-year old kid and an 80-year old woman who could be his grandmother taking the same class! And then there are factors such as cultural diversity and students with disabilities. All this is enriching but makes teaching more complex.

The Université du Québec (UQ) system has played an important role in making university education available to all: people going back to school to get a degree, to update their knowledge and skills, to pursue second careers. TÉLUQ, the first university in Québec to offer distance education, has made

it possible for many students to obtain university degrees. And having university campuses in places such as Chicoutimi, Abitibi-Témiscamingue, Rimouski and Outaouais has opened up access to university degrees of all kinds.

The teaching staff, which was once made up exclusively of professors, now includes sessional lecturers teaching at all levels. This academic rank, which was supposed to be temporary, includes people who earn their living by teaching and others who have day jobs with other organizations. But all of them are dedicated to disseminating knowledge.

These changes may be challenging but the UQ system deserves full credit for giving so many Quebecers the opportunity to get an education. Long live the UQ! ■

The université du Québec (UQ) system has played an important role in making university education available to all: people going back to school to get a degree, to update their knowledge and skills, to pursue second careers.



(UQAH) Early days at UQAH: Prefab sheds from the time when it was Université du Québec - services universitaires de l'Outaouais (SUO) (circa 1971). (Source: Réseau : bulletin d'information de l'Université du Québec, Vol. 3, No. 1 (September 7-21, 1971), p. 7. (Photo credit: Studio impact, Ottawa / Université du Québec archives. Additional information from Patricia Forget of UQO.)

A special mission for distance education?



Nancy Turgeon
Syndicat des tuteurs et des tutrices de la Télé-université (STTTU)

Distance teaching is always challenging and it is particularly so in the UQ system, with its many first-generation university students, part-time students and those juggling the demands of work, family and study. Distance education can help democratize higher education for students in Québec's regions and those with atypical educational paths. However, the UQ system must resist the temptation to use it to mitigate the effects of university underfunding. TÉLUQ provides an example of administrative abuses in which the needs of the student body have been sacrificed on the altar of inter-university competition and the commodification of knowledge.

TÉLUQ students are particularly vulnerable to this kind of shift in UQ's social mission since they take the entirety of their university studies remotely. TÉLUQ had always focused on individualized supervision, which helped students overcome their isolation. The students who benefited from the educational support provided by tutors included new immigrants registered in language programs. However, TÉLUQ short-circuited negotiations with the union about adapting the collective agreement to these groups with specific needs and contracted out the work of the tutors to a private firm, Institut MATCI.

The private sector's intrusion into the UQ system thus assumed a completely new form, which is a source of concern to the entire teaching staff. Does the Act respecting universities really allow hiring from outside our institutions and our bargaining units? After a bitter struggle and with strong support from FNEEQ, the tutors succeeded in putting an end to this partial privatization of a UQ institution, especially after political pressure led to the suspension of the director general who had supported the project. Will this be enough for the administrations of UQ universities to sit up and take notice or will others have to continue the fight elsewhere?

Outsourcing is only one of several ways that institutions can use distance education to circumvent the collective agreements we negotiated to secure good working and study conditions. The employer is quite adept at using distance education as a money-making tool. At TÉLUQ, the new job title of contract instructor has been created to replace the tutors, making it possible to drastically reduce supervision time per student – something experienced tutors



(TÉLUQ) TÉLUQ's building on Saint-Sacrement Avenue in Québec City (undated). (Photographer unknown / Université du Québec archives)

will never accept, given the importance of individual supervision for UQ's distance education students. So the fight for quality distance education in the UQ system is not over, and sessional lecturers at other universities, including UQAM and UQAC, are taking it up and pressing to have it entrenched in their collective agreements. ■

After a bitter struggle and with strong support from FNEEQ, the tutors succeeded in putting an end to this partial privatization of a UQ institution, especially after political pressure led to the suspension of the director general who had supported the project. Will this be enough for the administrations of UQ universities to sit up and take notice or will others have to continue the fight elsewhere?

The *Université du Québec* system: Once a reality, now an empty shell



It is generally agreed that the *Université du Québec* (UQ) system was phenomenally successful in achieving its core goal of making post-secondary education widely accessible, and that it was able to articulate a new vision of the type of university that needed to be created for that purpose. Against the elitism that prevailed at the time in the “old guard” universities, dedicated to maintaining the social status of university education, there was a call for universities “by the people, for the people.”

Richard Perreault

Syndicat des chargées et chargés de cours - Université du Québec à Chicoutimi (SCCCUQAC)

But half a century has since elapsed. What has happened in the meantime? We will focus on just one development but it says a good deal about what the UQ system is, what it isn't, and what it should be.

It's a recent development: the Rector of Université du Québec à Chicoutimi (UQAC) has announced an investment to expand and modernize the university's small centre for the teaching of 3D animation and digital design. In and of itself, this seems unremarkable. Dozens of similar “sub-centres” are already operating within the UQ network across Québec. However, this particular announcement is notable for several reasons. First, the scale of the project: \$40 million, or one third of UQAC's total annual budget. Second, the location: the centre is in Montréal and that's where the money will be spent. So it won't be Montréal investing in Chicoutimi, which might make sense, but Chicoutimi investing in Montréal, which seems to defy all logic. It's David against Goliath. Third, the centre won't be staying at its current location in Montréal but moving to a prestige address in Montréal's Quartier des Spectacles, the centre of the centre, so to speak.

In the current state of university education in Québec, this can be considered a big win for UQAC. They deserve sincere congratulations. But is it a win for the Université du Québec system, whose 50th birthday we are celebrating? The question may

well be asked. What does this win mean — or better still, of what is it symptomatic — when we take a long view of the UQ system as a whole?

A central administration into a social club

The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines a system as “a complex whole, a set of things working together as a mechanism or interconnecting network.” The operative word here is “whole.” Historically, the dependence of the parts on the whole was guaranteed by the fact that the funding went to UQ, which then distributed the funds to its various constituent parts. “The central office and the board of governors are responsible for the operating and capital budgets of each unit. Every year, UQ must submit a financial report and activity report to the government.”¹

The first breach in this principle was opened by UQAM, which felt that centralized distribution of funding failed to take into account its specific circumstances, since it had to compete with the chartered universities. UQAM ultimately prevailed and was granted “associated university” status after a prolonged 10-year battle. UQTR then asked for the same status. Finally, several years later, the government decided to strip UQ's central administration of responsibility for the member universities' budgets and took over the process.

1 Martial Dasilva, “L'Université du Québec: université nouvelle, nouvelles universités,” *Bulletin d'histoire politique* Vol. 16, No. 2, p. 13..

By removing its funding authority, the government transformed the central administration into a social club. The system as we knew it ceased to exist. With no authority over the system's constituent parts, the UQ office became nothing more than a place for powerless governors to meet from time to time, bring each other up to date, and, in the words of former UQAM rector Robert Proulx, rubber stamp whatever the member universities put before them. It is worth quoting Proulx at greater length to get a sense of his take on the UQ system: "I'm not questioning the Université du Québec concept. But why does there have to be such a top-heavy structure, with a board of governors and a planning commission, for example, which rubber stamps decisions because it has no power over what the universities do?"² It's great that Mr. Proulx says he's "not questioning the Université du Québec concept." Obviously, he knows it's not wise to run down one of Québec's "jewels," even if it survives only in the realm of the imagination.

A diverted mission

But what consequences has the achievement of full independence by the individual universities in the UQ system had? Compounded by the series of funding restrictions imposed by the government, the impacts have been catastrophic for the universities' ability to fulfil their missions, particularly outside the large population centres.

To see exactly how catastrophic, we need only return to our starting point, the \$40 million allocated to Université du Québec à Chicoutimi but invested in Montréal.

UQAC's mission is to support local economic and cultural development and, "to the extent possible, to help stabilize the region's population by affording students the opportunity to pursue their studies in their community."³ It is difficult to see how this basic goal can be achieved by spending money in Montréal. On the contrary, it will drive more students to Montréal to take the program there.

UQAC's mission is to make university education accessible in places where it wasn't previously available. This goes to the heart of what small-town universities are meant to do. It is why UQAC has satellite campuses in Sept-Îles, Saint-Félicien and Alma. It is difficult to see how this mission can be reconciled with opening a centre in Montréal, surrounded by half a dozen large and medium-sized

universities that are perfectly accessible and have abundant professional, physical and financial resources to offer such a program.

How are we to make sense of this decision, when UQAC has a very successful video game development program and a computer science program that is operating at full capacity? On the face of it, bringing the 3D animation and digital design program under the same roof (with some adjustments) would have been at least as viable as offering it in Montréal. Clearly, UQAC has the winning conditions for developing a program of that type in Chicoutimi — except the money, which is available in Montréal, to UQAC, as long as it is used in Montréal. UQAC is leaping headfirst into the brave new world of competition and commodification.

The mission of universities has been submerged in the culture of inter-university competition and clientelism that is driving the commodification of education. We're not blaming UQAC for doing what everyone else is doing. We're only taking this concrete example, with which we are familiar, to illustrate our point. It could have been any other university. We must face the facts: the loss of the original UQ system has led to chaotic, uncontrolled development of academic infrastructures and a proliferation of off-campus or standalone centres on the doorsteps of competing universities, like IGAs popping up wherever there's a Metro or Tim Hortons wherever there's a McDonald's.

To prevent all this, a genuine system was and remains necessary. But of the "jewel" the UQ system once was, there remains only an empty, meaningless shell. ■

2 Kathleen Levesque, "L'UQAM veut s'affranchir du réseau public," *La Presse*, February 2, 2015.

3 Martial Dassilva, "L'Université du Québec: université nouvelle, nouvelles universités," *Bulletin d'histoire politique* Vol. 16, No. 2, p. 16.

Université du Québec and the regions



Part of the mission of the Université du Québec system is to make higher education accessible to all Quebecers while contributing to scientific progress in Québec and the development of its regions.

Louise Bérubé
Syndicat des chargées et chargés de cours de l'Université du Québec à Rimouski (SCCUQAR)

Before the UQ system was founded, young people who wished to pursue university studies had to move to major urban centres. But once they moved away from their native regions to study, many graduates would never return, contributing to population decrease as well as intellectual and economic decline in smaller centres. Others would choose to forgo university studies altogether rather than leave their communities. Small-town universities have a higher rate of first-generation students, indicative of young people's desire to remain in their communities for their studies – an opportunity their parents didn't have..

There are a number of university programs that involve cooperation with local businesses, giving students a chance to show their potential and gain recognition. And the community benefits from having students stay in the region to build their careers. Not only are the institutions in the UQ system attractive due to their geographical proximity but they also turn out the future professionals that local businesses and organizations need. By enabling young people to stay close to home for their studies, the Université du Québec contributes to the vitality of the regions where its universities are located and this in turn instills a sense of belonging and pride in its institutions.

The UQ system's universities and their local centres are spread across a vast territory, making it possible for students to pursue specialized education while remaining in familiar surroundings. Take for example the Nursing Sciences program that UQAR offers in the Gaspé and on the North Shore. Without decentralized university education, it would be difficult for people living in remote areas to get the advanced training they need.



(UQAR) The façade of UQAR's main building, formerly the Ursulines monastery, became the property of UQ on August 28, 1974 (undated). (Photographer unknown / Université du Québec archives)

The geographical location of the institutions in the UQ system also encourages specialized research that taps into community resources, as in the case of Marine Sciences at UQAR and Mines at UQAT. In sum, the communities that UQ institutions call home are energized by the intellectual, economic and social stimulus those institutions provide, and everyone benefits. ■

By enabling young people to stay close to home for their studies, the Université du Québec contributes to the vitality of the regions where its universities are located and this in turn instills a sense of belonging and pride in its institutions.



(IAF) Premier of Québec opens Pavillon Hansen at the Institut Armand-Frappier (IAF), August 30, 1976. Left to right: Jean Lupien, MP; Robert Després, President of UQ; Robert Bourassa, Premier of Québec; Aurèle Beaulnes, Director General of IAF; André Charron, Chairman of the Board of Governors of IAF. (Source: Réseau : le magazine de l'Université du Québec, Vol. 9, No. 8 (July 1978), p. 17. (Photographer unknown / Université du Québec archives)



(UQAM) Pavillon Lafontaine, 1301 Sherbrooke St. East, formerly the École Normale Jacques-Cartier, home of the education faculty at the time (undated). (Photo credit: Daniel Bordeleau / Université du Québec archives)

Nicolas Harvey
Lecturer and member of the FNEEQ environment committee
Université du Québec en Outaouais

Code red! “We’ve entered a period of dramatic climate change. This is an emergency!” In the current situation, the Master’s program in sustainable management of forest ecosystems addresses a pressing need.

The constituent institutions of the *Université du Québec* are independent but some projects are difficult to realize without the involvement of several institutions in the system. For example, the Master’s program in sustainable management of forest ecosystems is offered jointly by UQAM, UQAT and UQO. Professors and lecturers from the three universities contribute their expertise to offer the multidisciplinary program, accompanied by internships. It was jointly developed and introduced as the UQ system’s response to new training needs in the wake of the Coulombe Commission’s report on management of Québec’s public forests. The 1999 documentary *L’Erreur boréale* also helped turn the spotlight on forest management in Québec.

The program, launched in 2013, focuses on problems in the use of forest lands, the interactions between players, the opportunities for indigenous and non-indigenous communities, and the role of forests in producing ecological services, using a problem-solving approach. Classes are conducted in Ripon, Rouyn-Noranda and Montréal simultaneously by videoconference. ■



1 <https://www.lepacte.ca/>.

The changing role of sessional lecturers



Since the foundation of the *Université du Québec* system, sessional lecturers have made an important contribution to its mission and visibility. That contribution has evolved over time. While teaching is still central to what they do, they are performing a growing number of other functions .

Marie Blais
Syndicat des chargées et chargés de cours de l'UQAM (SCCQ)

In 1987, a study of lecturers in Québec universities produced by the Conseil des universités found that close to 2,900 lecturers were teaching over 51% of the courses offered in the *Université du Québec* system. Thirty years later, nearly 4,300 lecturers in the UQ system are still responsible for over half its courses. If higher education has become more democratically accessible in Québec, it is due, in part, to them. .

In the mid-1980s, after a first wave of unionization, lecturers' unions decided to better coordinate their efforts. Their first visibility campaign, under the slogan "les chargées de cours montrent leur face et prennent leur place" ("lecturers show their face and take their rightful place"), was the harbinger of multiple mobilizations. The 1987 strikes, and especially a seven-week walk-out at UQAM that was ended by a special law, were a turning point in the history of our movement. The *Act respecting the Université du Québec* was amended and lecturers were given standing to sit on the board of governors, the academic committee and the various sub-committees of each constituent institution. Funds were also established to foster greater inclusion of lecturers in academic life.

Since the early 1990s, for instance, UQAM has funded projects enabling lecturers to participate in pedagogical activities or to support students along their academic path. More recently, the "Fonds d'intégration" has supported lecturers' involvement in services to the community.

During the aughts, unions obtained a research and creation component in their professional development fund. Lecturers became eligible for grants supporting the advancement of knowledge. More and more lecturers held Ph.Ds, they obtained research grants, but they couldn't pay themselves out of those grants. Finally, in the late 2010s, UQAT, then UQAM, and

finally most of the other constituent universities acknowledged that lecturers can do research and creative work.

Lecturers have always played an active role in the universities' missions, without being truly acknowledged and always finding themselves in a precarious position. Almost 30 years after their first visibility campaign, despite a stronger presence and increased visibility, lecturers are still fighting for their rightful place. ■



(UQAM) "La Grande Place" in the Pavillon Judith-Jasmin (undated). (Photographer unknown / Université du Québec archives)

Evaluating the effectiveness of sessional lecturers in the UQ network



Student evaluation of teachers and of teaching is intended to improve the quality of teaching and help guide decision-making about teaching staff. However, many studies, along with a recent Ontario arbitration decision, raise doubts about the appropriateness of this method for gauging the quality of sessional lecturers at universities.

Laurent Arel
Syndicat des chargés-es de cours de l'École de technologie supérieure
Service des enseignements généraux (SCETS-SEG)

Student evaluations serve to rate course preparation and organization, the workload, the fairness of grading, and the lecturer's pedagogical skills.

Unfortunately, even though many university policies stipulate that student evaluations alone should not be the primary basis for the formal assessment of teaching, some UQ institutions, such as the l'École de technologie supérieure, use them to penalize lecturers.

Lancôt and Lafrance (May 2016) argue that we would do well to follow the lead of Canadian institutions that are collecting additional information by other means in order to get a more accurate picture of teachers' effectiveness and a better reflection of the realities they face.

This is also the thrust of a recent decision by an Ontario arbitrator, who directed Ryerson University to refrain from using student evaluations of teachers to measure teaching effectiveness. While arbitrator William Kaplan believes that student evaluations are useful for "capturing student experience" of a course and its instructor, he also stresses that expert testimony shows that "a key tool in assessing teaching effectiveness is flawed."

Studies by the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations, two of which were submitted to Arbitrator Kaplan, will be published this fall. That should provide a good opportunity for the now 50-year old *Université du Québec* to take the lead by acknowledging the solid evidence that has emerged from dozens of studies and taking the necessary steps to develop rigorous assessment measures. ■

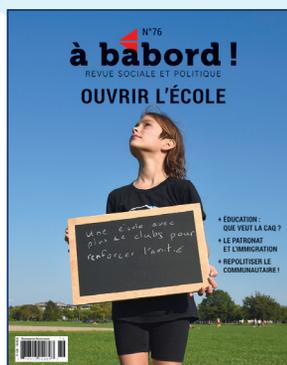
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REVUE SOCIALE ET POLITIQUE

News from the *regroupements*

Richard Bousquet, vice-president, *Regroupement université*



Unions define their priorities: Distance education takes centre stage

Lecturers' unions belonging to the FNREEQ have decided to make distance education their action priority. The new coordinated bargaining demands, and our political response to the new CAQ government, are two other subjects that will keep *Regroupement Université* busy through the spring of 2019.

Distance education is an excellent way to improve access to education. But at a time when education is being commodified and subjected to profit imperatives, it also entails risks: fragmentation of tasks, proliferation of statuses, loss of independence and intellectual property rights, homogenization of education, the spread of outsourcing. We need to draw an up-to-date portrait of the situation and establish a common position on the conditions we want to negotiate locally to regulate the development of distance education.

With our previous coordinated bargaining demands, a number of unions were able to gain recognition of lecturers' contributions to research and creative work. It remains to obtain funding for it. Our new set of demands will define our negotiating priorities for the next three years. Our approach, based on cooperation and information-sharing, is a way to make sure that a win by some becomes a win for all.

We will have to respond to the new government's view of education as something that exists to serve business. We have reason to fear that the power of the private sector will increase, and that outsourcing will become more acceptable.

Our other priority areas of concern for the coming years include employment stability, the funding formula for universities, the role of lecturers in the collegial management of our institutions, student evaluation of teachers and artificial intelligence. ■

Josée Chevalier, vice-president, *Regroupement cégep*



The *Regroupement Cégep's* first meeting of the year was held in Joliette and we took the opportunity to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the *Syndicat des enseignantes et enseignants du Cégep régional de Lanaudière* in Joliette. We thank to the union for hosting us in style at the art museum and treating us to local products. The celebration was a big success! !

This year as in years past, we face many challenges, particularly the need to regulate teachers' working conditions in light of the rapid expansion of distance education and teleteaching. In addition, there is the growing number of public-private partnerships, ongoing attacks on professional independence, and the increasing commodification of education.

The new CAQ government's platform neglects higher education. That was reflected in the CAQ's decision to create a single Education ministry, instead of distinguishing between higher education and the elementary and secondary school systems. Before the election, Jean-François Roberge, now the

Minister of Education, made it clear that he intends to further align the Cégeps with the needs of the market by creating more Attestation of Collegial Studies (ACS) programs, and that he wants to review the pre-university programs. All these plans are in direct contradiction with what we advocate when it comes to national programs and the Cégep system's coherence.

Under the circumstances, we can expect negotiation of our collective agreement to prove fairly complex. But we remain confident and the atmosphere was enthusiastic when the members of the mobilization and bargaining committee were elected at the second *Regroupement Cégep* meeting of the year on October 18. There were eleven candidates for the five open positions, which made for a healthy democratic process. Congratulations to all those who were bold enough to throw their hats into the ring and, of course, to the successful candidates.

The meeting was preceded by a two-day joint forum organized by the coordinating committee of the CSN's public and parapublic sectors (CCSPP).

Léandre Lapointe, vice-president, *Regroupement privé*



As we begin our terms of office, we find ourselves facing a new government in Québec City. It's a government of business people, political rookies with little experience, but they are firmly entrenched with a solid majority. When it comes to education, the new governing party has some lofty and worthy goals when it comes to issues like early diagnosis of children with learning difficulties,

recognizing the value of the teaching profession, genuine consultation, and providing greater support for teachers. Those promises have been heard loud and clear by the members of the *Regroupement Privé* and we are calling for them to be quickly translated into concrete action.

We are heading into a big year for bargaining at the private institutions. Collective agreements are up for renewal at close to a dozen schools: *Collège Notre-Dame-de-Lourde, Jean de la Mennais, Stanislas, François-de-Laval, Saint-Sacrement, Séminaire*

Saint-François, l'École Pasteur, Campus Notre-Dame-de-Foy, the Innu community of Pessamit and the support staff at *Collège Villa Maria*. Teaching staff at Kell's Academy are currently negotiating the terms of their first collective agreement. The members of the FNEEQ team are involved in these negotiations and actively supporting teachers in their efforts to obtain better working conditions and full recognition of their rights

Our unions will also tackle a variety of issues such as outsourcing, distance learning, technological change, the handling of complaints, enforcement of the rules on parental leave and the possible creation by the current government of a professional association. These existing or potential problems are matters of major concern to the unions in our sector. ■

It brought together delegates from the four federations involved (who also demonstrated in front of the National Assembly to put the new government on notice). One of the questions raised

was the possibility of organizing a joint forum. We welcome this initiative and hope it will be repeated throughout the 2020 bargaining talks. ■



Bargaining committee: Philip Lagogiannis (Dawson), Anne-Marie Bélanger (Joliette), Sébastien Manka (Montmorency) Caroline Quesnel, Josée Chevalier, Yanick Charbonneau, Josée Déziel (Ahuntsic), Michel Milot and Luc Vandal (Shawinigan).



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