

ANSUT ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22



ANSUT

ASSOCIATION OF NOVA SCOTIA UNIVERSITY TEACHERS

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President's Report

It has now been two years since COVID-19 first hit as we move towards what we hope will be the crest of the 6th wave of the pandemic. These years have been difficult ones in post-secondary education, as they have been in other sectors. First, there was a complete lockdown and a move to online teaching only at most institutions during the 2020-21 academic year. The 2021-22 witnessed a return to in person teaching for most of us, but many other things remained abnormal. Travel for conferences was curtailed, service work and meetings remained largely online and campus life remained a pale version of its former self.

During this time, universities across the province predicted dire financial consequences from the pandemic. So dire, in fact, that every university in the province asked for wage cutbacks from faculty and staff. In part through the work of our local associations, ANSUT, and what became the Student, Staff, and Faculty Association (SSFA) – a group of over 20 unions working in post-secondary education in the province -- we were able to avert such demands upon unionized faculty and staff. As we expected, the doom and gloom predicted by our employers turned out to be false with every one of the universities in the province showing budget surpluses. Perhaps most astonishing was a surplus of \$18 million at Cape Breton University on an ~\$85 million budget!

Unfortunately, our employers have paid scant attention to its unions over the past two years with very little to no true consultation. As is all too common in the increasingly corporatized university environment, faculty and staff were simply told what administration had decided unilaterally. While the pandemic provided a great opportunity for a return to more genuinely collegial governance, the opposite proved to be the reality. This has been clearly illustrated in collective agreement negotiations over the past year, with two strikes occurring at Acadia University and the Université Sainte Anne. Indeed, the Acadia strike had to be sent to binding arbitration for resolution this summer, and the Université Sainte Anne is still ongoing making it the longest university strike in the history of Atlantic Canada. So, despite numerous acknowledgements from our employers about the incredible job we have done during the pandemic, when time came to reflect this in negotiations, employers took an astoundingly hard line on everything from wages and workloads to governance with the employer, attempting to cut into time honoured issues such as tenure and shared governance. This does not bode well for a number of our associations who will begin bargaining this summer. It looks like we shall have to prepare for our employers taking a similar hard line. So, as AUFA and APPBUSA have done, we must be vigilant and display solidarity among our members in order to attain fair and equitable collective agreements.

Scott Stewart
ANSUT President

INDIGENIZING THE ACADEMY

April 2021—David Newhouse, Professor of Indigenous Studies at Trent University in the Chanie Wenjack School for Indigenous Studies, offered his knowledge in indigenizing collective agreements. 20 faculty from NS and NB learned about the commitment, collective action and sustained effort required to have Indigenous knowledge included, and accepted, in many areas of PSE, including, students, faculty, governance, academic programs, spaces and indigenization planning.

ORGANIZING FOR POWER

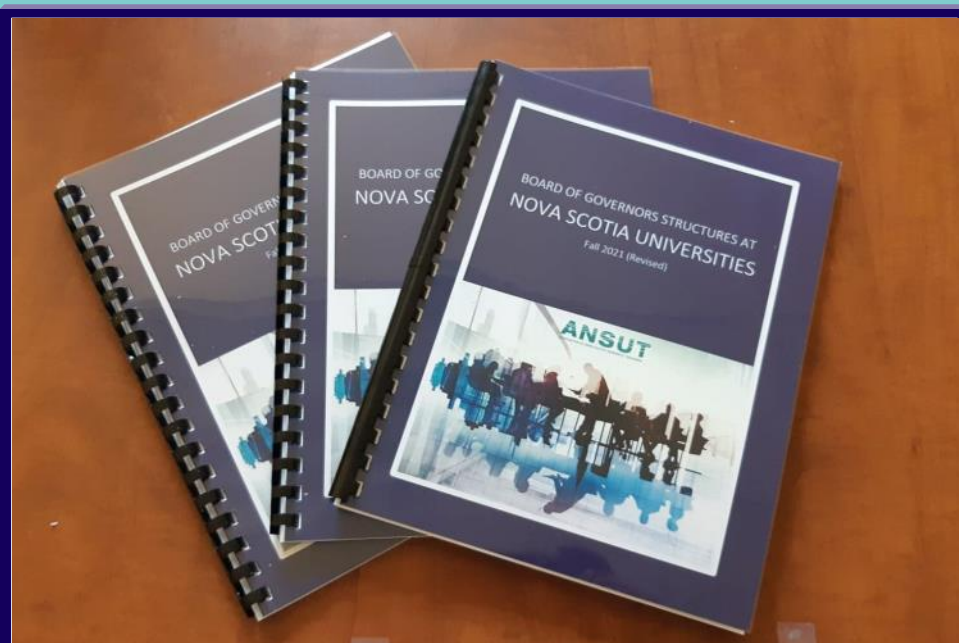
May/June 2021— Based on the teachings of labor organizer and educator Jane McAlevey, O4P is a free online training and networking program for organizers worldwide. ANSUT's team of 16 students, part and full-time faculty from 4 universities completed the course with over 8,000 people. The training focused on building large majorities in settings such as workplaces, unions, and housing complexes in order to win the toughest campaigns and organizing battles.

EDIA ROUNDTABLE

August 21—ANSUT hosted a roundtable on issues facing EDIA-seeking groups, including lack of diversity among full- and part-time faculty, collective agreement language, hiring practices and support for new hires. 15 people from several FAs shared their thoughts and concerns on EDIA at their universities, and discussed potential solutions, which will be discussed in more detail at a conference 2022/23.

ACCFA ROUNDTABLE

December 2021— A mid-year meeting of the Atlantic Canada Council of Faculty Associations (ACCFA) provided opportunity for approx. 15 members to share highlights of the academic year to date, including concerns regarding COVID-19 policies and practices at their universities.



BOARD OF GOVERNORS REPORT & PANEL DISCUSSION

As part of its ongoing research into postsecondary education in Nova Scotia, ANSUT has prepared a report titled *Board of Governors Structures at Nova Scotia Universities*. The report aims to inform, empower, and mobilize faculty and student governors to participate more effectively on Boards and also compares structures and procedures of Boards to identify best practices, which could help to effect positive change at Nova Scotia universities.

The report affirms the representational nature of Boards, investigates the way representation and process work on Boards, and examines and assesses the way in which a corporate model of governance is influencing Boards. In preparing this report, ANSUT surveyed Faculty Associations, University Acts/Charters, and Board websites across the province to gather information on Board membership, executive structures, by-laws, meetings, training for new members, and communication practices, and also collaborated with the Canadian Federation of Students Nova Scotia (CFS-NS). The completed report, which expands on a recent national report by the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), will be shared with the Minister of Advanced Education, University administrators, board chairs, faculty association and student union presidents, and board representatives across the province.

In November 2021, the report was introduced at a panel discussion, organized by ANSUT, to help faculty and student representatives participate more effectively on Boards of Governors. The session welcomed faculty and students from 13 faculty and student associations throughout Atlantic Canada with presenters from ANSUT, CFS-NS and CAUT, followed by discussion and Q&A session.

MEMBER SUPPORT

This year saw not one, but two ANSUT member associations initiate strike action against their employers.

AUFA (Acadia University Faculty Association), called a successful strike vote in December 2021, with 90% of its members voting 94% in favour of strike action if an agreement with the employer could not be reached. While AUFA was committed to reaching a tentative agreement without striking, conciliation failed and the members walked out on February 1 over issues of financial sustainability, diversity and inclusion and academic integrity within the framework of the university's governance model. The strike lasted 4 weeks, with both parties agreeing to binding arbitration.

APPBUSA (Association des professeur et professeures et bibliothecaires de l'Universit Sainte-Anne) are currently still embroiled in the longest faculty strike in Atlantic Canada. With a strong strike vote from its members, APPBUSA began the strike on March 3, 2022, after conciliation attempts over issues of better working conditions, pay equity with academic staff across the province, and a healthier working relationship between academic staff and the administration, failed. Despite willingness from APPBUSA to send unresolved issues to binding arbitration, the employer refused, and the province appointed a conciliator on April 18.

Flying and driving pickets representing the CAUT Defence Fund, ANSUT and member locals attended weekly solidarity rallies and offered support each week during the strike. ANSUT members spoke at many of the rallies, and assisted with social media promotion and letter writing campaigns for both associations.



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