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PRESIDENT'S VOICE

Walking a Fine Line

Some recent examples of how collegial governance can improve working conditions for QUFA Members, even when they fall outside the CA

By Karen Rudie
President, QUFA

In my *QUFA Voices* column last month and in other *QUFA Voices* columns last year, I've made the point that the primary tool we have for QUFA to assert authority in protecting our working conditions is the Collective Agreement (CA). What I meant was that while there may be many things going on at Queen's that might prevent you from enjoying work as much as you'd like or that you might think are unfair or unreasonable, that doesn't necessarily mean that QUFA can do anything about them. I also mentioned that participation in collegial governance is one path to improving working conditions that fall outside the CA. Sometimes QUFA and collegial governance can work in concert to support change in the University. We've had some recent examples of the impact of such collaboration.

At Queen's Senate in April, there was a notice of motion to have Senate

QUFA IMAGES

Imagine the Potabilities



Robert G. May

Is Queen's drinking water safe? How potable is the potable water on campus? In response to QUFA Member concerns, QUFA Equity Representative Diane Beauchemin conducted an experiment to find out. Read the results on p. 10 of this issue of QUFA Voices!

recommend to the Queen's Board of Trustees a new entity called a "College," which would be housed within a Faculty; part of this motion was to further recommend to the Board of Trustees the creation of a College of Computer Science. To be clear, QUFA has no stake in or even opinion on whether a College of Computer Science would be beneficial or not, nor do we try and forestall any change for the sake of resisting change. QUFA did object to the violation of our rollover agreement in

which Queen's Administration was required to have meaningful consultation with us about any anticipated structural changes, and prior to that April Senate meeting, no such consultation with QUFA had taken place. A group of QUFA Members approached QUFA asking to meet to discuss their concerns about the motion. I am grateful to those Members: it spurred us into action and led to QUFA consulting with CAUT on the roles of senates in the Canadian university landscape and the

interplay between university senates and boards of trustees (called “Boards of Governors” at other universities). The mobilization of this group of QUFA Members together with the Senate Faculty Caucus led to many of us raising at the April Senate meeting concerns around the lack of consultation regarding a new academic entity. As a result, the motion, which was intended to come forward in May, was delayed until September to allow for consultation to take place over the summer. In September, we found out at Senate that the results of the consultation led to the Provost withdrawing the motion.

Another example where QUFA has had a profound impact on rights for our Members that fall outside the CA is the recent Financial Services Regulatory Authority (FSRA) decision. FSRA determined that Continuing Adjuncts become eligible to join the pension plan even if their Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) appointment is less than 1.0, if in the previous two years they have worked enough hours or earned enough money (as prescribed by the FSRA letter). Having two additional years of pension contributions can make a significant difference in one’s pension payments upon retirement. QUFA initiated this advocacy in 2022, and it was our challenging of the inconsistent determination by Queen’s of pension eligibility of Continuing Adjuncts at Queen’s that led to the FSRA decision.¹

Most recently, I attended the open session of the Board of Trustees on 2 October 2026. The key decision-making occurs in the closed sessions of Board meetings, to which QUFA is not invited. However, at the open session, there was a high-level discussion of the finances of the University. There we were told that the University finished the fiscal year with a \$160 million dollar surplus and that there will be investment in a new state-of-the-art building with laboratory equipment. As QUFA’s observer at the Board of Trustees open sessions, I’m entitled to ask questions. With data and analysis supplied by Dan Cohen, the Chair of QUFA’s Finance and Budget Review Committee, I noted that the University’s Internally Restricted net assets have grown to \$544 million, including a large increase in general capital reserves. At the same time, QUFA professors and librarians are dealing with unclean washrooms, decrepit offices, and growing class sizes with not enough Teaching Assistant support. I noted that we have the same number of tenure-track faculty now as we did in 2014, but enrolment has increased by 6,000! I asked whether at the closed session the Trustees will be discussing these conditions for our teaching and learning when making financial decisions. I cannot say what took place at the closed session, but I think something was achieved by making Trustees aware of the circumstances in which our teaching and research take place.

You might ask, then, why can’t QUFA always step in when it seems obvious to you that something bad is happening, even if it’s outside our CA? The primary reason is that we cannot infringe on the rights of the Administration to manage the University. This is the quintessential fine balance required of faculty unions under labour law: we get to protect the rights enshrined in the CA, and the Administration gets to manage the University however it sees fit so long as CA rights are not violated. Furthermore, we are selective about what we champion outside the CA because we do not have infinite time and resources. More than that, though, as a union we are not in the business of managing a university, and much of the time we are happy not to be: QUFA Members’ priorities and concerns are diverse and often contradictory. The CA is the joint contract with the employer that all Bargaining Unit members have the right to vote on, and as such, it is where we say “This! This is what QUFA will protect and defend and champion for the next three years.”

Note

¹More information about this decision was sent to QUFA Members in an e-mail on 9 October 2026, and can also be found on p. 6-7 of this issue of *QUFA Voices*.

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QUFA Voices publishes QUFA-related news and information for QUFA Members and provides QUFA Members with a forum to express their QUFA-related ideas and opinions. We want to hear from you! Please send your QUFA-related story ideas, news items, opinion pieces, letters to the editor, photographs, and other submissions to the editor.

QUFA Voices is edited by Robert G. May. He can be reached at mayr@queensu.ca.

FINANCES

Financial Statement Analysis 2025-2026

An update on the University's finances, including an \$87.5 million operating surplus while spending on faculty declines

By the Finance and Budget Review Committee (FBRC), QUFA

As is our yearly tradition, the Finance and Budget Review Committee has undertaken an analysis of the University's audited financial statements for 2025-2026.¹ These statements, although backwards looking, provide the clearest picture of the University's finances. Unlike budget projections, which rely upon political assumptions about the future, audited financial statements report upon realized figures and therefore provide greater clarity on the University's finances.

While last year we reported upon what we called then a "substantial surplus" of \$60 million overall and an operating-fund surplus of \$20 million, this year's operating surplus more than triples last year's figure. According to the audited financial records, the University ended the fiscal year with *a total surplus of \$160.4 million and an operating surplus of \$87.5 million.*

However, as with last year, the Administration continues to direct these surpluses towards ever-growing capital reserve and into funds that increase the centralization of control over University resources.

Overall Budget Picture: Surpluses with Increased Centralized Control Over Resources

Unlike last year, this year's surplus was not entirely driven by investment income. As the University notes, even before considering "investment income not allocated to operations," the operating fund recorded a

ANNOUNCEMENT

Annual Reports

Annual Reports are normally due on 2 October per Article 28 of the Collective Agreement (CA), but there has been a one-time deadline extension this year to

Friday 30 October 2026

The Annual Reports cover the 2025-2026 academic year (1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026). Please note the different processes for Full-Time Faculty and Term Adjuncts.

Term Adjuncts must fill out Appendix F in the CA. These reviews are important not only as an annual review, but they are requirements for General Right of Reappointment (GRoR) and Continuing Adjunct conversion applications. See Article 32 of the CA for details.

The 2025-2026 Annual Report covers teaching, service, and research work during the following terms:

- **Summer Term 2025** (July-Aug. 2025);
- **Fall Term 2025** (Sept.-Dec. 2025);
- **Winter Term 2026** (Jan.-Apr. 2026); and
- **Spring Term 2026** (May-June 2026).

For questions about Annual Reports, please contact QUFA Member Services Officer Doug Nesbitt (d.nesbitt@queensu.ca).

\$800,000 surplus. This is despite this figure being lowered by an additional \$27 million transfer to capital, which was funded by existing capital reserves (see more about accounting for capital expenditures below). This surplus before investment income also comes even with the University allocating more resources to the Provost and Vice-Principal (Finance)'s Transition Fund (see last year's piece in *QUFA Voices* for a discussion of this fund²), which grew from \$39.9 million to \$49.7 million in 2025-2026 and is up from \$10.9 million in 2022-2023. This year's surplus can partially be attributed to the increase in the Provincial operating grant, which grew from \$226 million in 2024-2025 to \$247 million in 2025-2026.

Owing to the large overall and operational surplus, the University's financial situation improved last year. The University's internally restricted net assets (e.g., capital reserves,

operating contingencies) increased from \$446 million to \$544 million, signalling a strong buffer for any future uncertainty. This increase mostly came from the University's decision to allocate \$86.7 million of investment income to capital reserves, which resulted in those reserves growing from \$231 million to \$306 million.³ These capital reserves include \$189 million in general capital reserves, which are not allocated to specific projects but "are operating funds set aside to support strategic capital investment priorities at the University." This means that these are unallocated funds, which will be used entirely at the Senior Leadership Team's and Board of Trustees' discretion.

You can revisit last year's article in *QUFA Voices* for a discussion on how treating investment income as an unexpected windfall every year harms the University's ability to plan and

ANNOUNCEMENT

Join the UPP Divestment Committee!

At the Fall General Meeting on 18 December 2025, the Membership passed a motion recommending the formation of an ad hoc committee to advocate for divestment of UPP investments from entities producing weapons that support violations of human rights.

Please see the May 2026 issue of QUFA Voices for terms of reference and more information:

qufa.ca/voices

If you are interested in joining this committee, please send a statement of interest noting your relevant expertise and/or background to QUFA Executive Director Leslie Jermyn (qufaed@queensu.ca) and to QUFA Vice President Melissa Houghtaling (m.houghtaling@queensu.ca).

Other QUFA Committees

Participate in the important work of your faculty association by joining a committee that matches your interests or expertise!

For a full list of QUFA committees, please visit the People page of the QUFA Web site:

<https://qufa.ca/people/#sta>

transparency in how funds are used.⁴ In a future issue, we plan to examine an alternative model of handling volatility in investment returns in a way that prioritizes ongoing operations (i.e., the Carleton Investment Income Equalization Fund).⁵

Trends: Revenues Increase While Spending on Faculty Decreases

In terms of trends, the University's revenues rose by 9.8% or by \$44 million last year (from \$1.156 billion to \$1.200 billion). This outpaced growth in expenses, which increased by only \$19 million (from \$1.165 billion to \$1.184 billion). Crucially for QUFA Members, *spending on faculty salaries actually declined over the past year as the University's expenditures on salaries and benefits dropped by 0.4%, driven by "a decrease in academic salaries relating to departures further to the voluntary*

retirement program for faculty, librarians, and archivists" (8). This decrease came despite an increase in individual Members' salaries, highlighting how much our faculty complement has fallen.

Meanwhile, Queen's long-term debt remained largely stable, with a slight decline from \$365 million to \$360 million. The University's position improved on all but one of the eight indicators the Provincial government uses to monitor the health of university finances.

Capital Expenditures and Collegial Governance

The vast increase in capital reserves raises the question of what the Administration and Board of Trustees plan to do with the hundreds of millions now concentrated in rapidly growing capital reserves. In a recent *Queen's Gazette* article,⁶ the

Administration specifically mentioned "the renovation of the former KCVI, and a proposed new science building" as priorities, and discussions at Senate and a Memorandum of Understanding with Simon Fraser University also highlight potential future spending on a supercomputer.⁷

Those with a longer history at Queen's will know that previous Administrations have made poor bets on past long-term capital expenditures when making decisions without input from those involved in the day-to-day operations of the University. In fact, as a result of this, in 2010, faculty managed to gain greater input into budgetary matters through the creation of a joint Board and Senate Planning Committee with a mandate of taking on "an oversight role of the University's budget development and capital project planning processes."⁸

Unfortunately, that committee was then dissolved in 2017 owing to a lack of satisfaction with its operations. At that point, faculty Senator Laeeque Daneshmend proved prescient in telling the *Queen's Journal* that "the motion left space for a disturbing lack of accountability between the Senate and the Board."⁹ Since that time, faculty have been left with little say into capital planning. This is a troubling turn of events considering that the University has directed hundreds of millions into capital reserves while implementing austerity measures elsewhere. Faculty will simply have to hope whatever big bets the University is making pay off.

Accounting for Capital Expenditures and Pressures on the Operating Fund

In the same *Queen's Gazette* article,¹⁰ the Administration claimed that transferring hundreds of millions from the operations to capital helps the operating fund by reducing the future need to pay ongoing capital costs out of operating revenues. There are

some important accounting ramifications that Members should be aware of here, however. Capital costs are attributed to the operating fund even when paid for by funds placed in the capital reserve through previous PIF transfers of investment income.¹¹ This can drive the creation of paper-only deficits in the operating fund, which are then published widely by the Administration.

This is exactly what happened in 2023 when, as described by the Administration, that year's "large deficit was partially driven by a \$30 million transfer to the capital fund to pay for the remaining portion of the internal loan for the Queen's Centre" with "no impact on the cash available to support the University's academic mission."¹² As noted earlier, the 2025-2026 operating budget saw a similar effect, as \$27 million was transferred out of the operating fund to "fund the Bioscience Facility Revitalization and 235 Frontenac Street projects." This reduced the operating fund surplus by \$27 million even though these projects were funded by capital reserves built through previous year PIF transfers rather than current operating revenues.

This means that in future years we will likely continue to see operating fund deficits (or smaller surpluses) that are driven by large up-front payments for capital expenditures paid out of capital reserves rather than that year's operating revenues.¹³ This is important to note because, unless faculty are vigilant, these inflated figures can be used to justify underinvestment in the academic mission of the University. For example, when discussing the need for cuts in 2023, the University published the transfer-inflated deficit figure until being forced to clarify matters at Senate.

Regardless of the accounting ramifications, the argument for using current revenues for long-term infrastructure investment goes

against best practice in public finance that long-term assets should be paid for by those who use them (as amortized over the long-term through debt) while operating revenues should be used for current expenses. As Wang and Hou¹⁴ argue, this is especially the case when public finances are under pressure. In moments of fiscal restraint, paying up front for capital expenditures hurts the ability of public institutions to mitigate the effects of downturns. These trade-offs and the negative repercussions on current operations of paying up front for capital expenses are hidden in claims that the decision to prioritize capital spending helps the operating fund.

Notes

¹https://www.queensu.ca/financialservices/sites/fin/www/files/uploaded_files/Publications/Annual%20Budget%20Reports/Queen's%20University%20at%20Kingston%202026.pdf

²Finance and Budget Review Committee. "A Troubling Transition." *QUFA Voices*, Oct. 2025, pp. 4-5.

³Substantial capital spending last year meant that the fund did not grow by the full amount of the transfer.

⁴Finance and Budget Review Committee. "A Troubling Transition." *QUFA Voices*, Oct. 2025, pp. 4-5.

⁵Rather than placing unexpectedly large investment income returns into capital reserves, Carleton places them into an investment income equalization fund to "mitigate this risk [in fluctuations] and shield the operating budget from large variations in actual results."

⁶<https://www.queensu.ca/gazette/stories/board-trustees-approves-2025-26-audited-consolidated-financial-statements>

⁷<https://www.queensu.ca/gazette/stories/queen-s-and-simon-fraser->

[university-partner-strengthen-canada-s-supercomputing-capabilities](#)

⁸<https://www.queensu.ca/gazette/content/planning-committees-mandate-strengthened>

⁹<https://www.queensjournal.ca/senate-meeting-discusses-us-immigration-order-internal-grants-and-senate-board-communications/>

¹⁰<https://www.queensu.ca/gazette/stories/board-trustees-approves-2025-26-audited-consolidated-financial-statements>

¹¹This is because the capital reserve is held in the operating fund. Yes, we know this is opaque and complex.

¹²<https://web.archive.org/web/20231201045630/https://www.queensu.ca/financialservices/publications/detailed-financial-faqs>

¹³This understanding of the University's accounting was confirmed in conversation with the Vice Principal (Finance and Administration).

¹⁴Wang, W. and Hou, Y. "Pay-as-You-Go Financing and Capital Outlay Volatility: Evidence from the States over Two Recent Economic Cycles." *Public Budgeting and Finance*, vol. 29, 2009, pp. 90-107.

The Finance and Budget Review Committee can be reached at qufa@queensu.ca.

QUFA VOICES Voice Your Views!

If you have an opinion about anything you read in *QUFA Voices*, send us a letter to the editor!

mayr@queensu.ca



PENSIONS

The Pension Promise: Out for Delivery

QUFA wins an important legal battle over pension eligibility that could reach well beyond Queen's campus!

Leslie Jermyn
Executive Director, QUFA

On 22 September 2026, the Financial Services Regulatory Authority (FSRA) sent a letter to the University Pension Plan (UPP) declaring that, as QUFA had argued, the UPP was not compliant with the Pension Benefits Act in assessing the eligibility of Continuing Adjuncts to join the pension plan. This article explains what this means and why it matters for QUFA Members and for precarious workers everywhere.

QUFA first challenged how Continuing Adjuncts were being assessed for pension eligibility in late 2022. We noticed that whether a newly converted Continuing Adjunct was admitted to the pension plan immediately, or was forced to work through a "qualifying period," or was not invited to join the pension plan at all, was internally inconsistent but also contradicted the rules governing pension eligibility that are outlined in the relevant statutes (the Pensions Benefit Act (PBA)).

We raised our concerns with Queen's, and some issues were resolved without the need for further litigation, for which we are grateful to those working in pension and benefits offices at the university. However, we could not reach agreement on everything and so escalated our concerns by writing directly to the UPP in September 2023.

The heart of the issue is how people who are not full-time, regular employees qualify to join a pension plan offered in a workplace. The PBA says that anyone working in a class of

FSRA
Financial Services Regulatory
Authority of Ontario



ARSF
Autorité ontarienne de réglementation
des services financiers

www.fsrao.ca

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By Email

September 22, 2026

Christine Chen
Chief Legal Officer
University Pension Plan
16 York Street, Suite 3300
Toronto ON M5J 0E6

Dear Christine Chen:

Re: Complaint regarding eligibility for Queen's University part-time Term Adjunct employees in the University Pension Plan Ontario

The Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario (FSRA) has completed its review of the complaint submitted by the Queen's University Faculty Association (QUFA) concerning the treatment of earnings and hours of employment accumulated by certain Queen's University part-time Term Adjunct employees prior to becoming eligible for membership in the University Pension Plan Ontario (UPP).

FSRA considered the relevant provisions of the Pension Benefits Act (PBA) and the UPP terms. FSRA also considered:

- QUFA's complaint, dated June 27, 2024;
- the submissions of the UPP, dated November 11, 2025;
- the submissions of the Employer Sponsor Committee, dated November 11, 2025;
- QUFA's reply submissions, dated March 23, 2026;
- the further submissions of the UPP, dated June 17, 2026; and
- the further submissions of the Employer Sponsor Committee, dated June 18, 2026.

Issue

The complaint concerns individuals who are initially employed by Queen's University as part-time Term Adjunct employees who are not eligible under the terms of the UPP to become members of the UPP (Non-Pension Eligible Term Adjuncts), and

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Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario

Read the Letter: QUFA Members can read the official letter about the decision from the Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario (FSRA) to the Chief Legal Officer of the University Pension Plan (UPP) on the QUFA Web site: <https://qufa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/Infosheet-Pension-Decision.pdf>

employment that is eligible to be included in the pension plan (Continuing Adjuncts are such a class at Queen's) qualifies to join, even if they are "part-time" (or less than 1.0 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) appointment) if, in the previous two years, they have worked enough hours (700 per annum) or earned enough money (35% of the Yearly Maximum Pensionable Earnings (YMPE) for the year).

Queen's and the UPP argued that at the time of conversion to Continuing Adjunct, people's previous work for Queen's was as a Term Adjunct, most of whom are not eligible to join the pension plan. They were forcing Continuing Adjuncts with less than a full-time appointment to work *two more years* to qualify to join the pension plan. So, in short, they said that even work that meets or surpasses the PBA thresholds, if done in a non-pension eligible class, doesn't

count, and the person only begins to qualify once they are working in a pension-eligible class.

We begged to differ and escalated our concerns, with the invaluable help of our pension lawyers at Koskie Minsky, to the FSRA for consideration in June 2024. Both the Employer Sponsor of the UPP and UPP management made substantive arguments to defend their practice of making people start qualifying after conversion to Continuing Adjunct. They were not successful, and the FSRA sided with us both on the interpretation of the PBA and on the principle of “promoting good administration of pension plans, and protecting and safeguarding the pension benefits and rights of pension-plan beneficiaries.”

If you’re in the middle of a giant shoulder shrug, understand that Continuing Adjuncts with less than 1.0 FTE already face a diminished pension horizon because their service is throttled to their FTE: someone with a 0.5 FTE must work two years to get one year’s pension service. Forcing them to work two additional years *just to qualify* to join the pension is unjust and, it turns out, inconsistent with pension law.

The FSRA has asked the UPP to respond to them by 23 November 2026 with a proposal outlining how the UPP will address this oversight. We hope they will do the right thing and put their considerable energies and attention to fixing this problem. We are poised to be of service to get the word out and help our affected Members understand their options.

However, and it’s a big one, while a very small number of Members could be affected in QUFA (resulting in an insignificant cost to Queen’s), this decision has the potential to change how any number of employer pensions are administered in our sector and beyond. That could prompt the UPP or the Employer Sponsor of the UPP to appeal the decision to

ANNOUNCEMENT

Constitutional Review Committee

QUFA is conducting a thorough review of its governing documents, which include its Constitution, Bylaws, and Policies and Protocols. As part of this process, Executive and Council approved the Terms of Reference and membership for a Constitutional Review Committee. The Committee is preparing a series of recommendations that will be presented to the general Membership at the Fall General Meeting on 9 December 2026 and, if necessary, at the Spring General Meeting on 21 April 2027. If you have any questions or comments regarding the review or associated documents, please contact Past President Cella Olmstead (olmstead@queensu.ca) or Executive Director Leslie Jermyn (qufaed@queensu.ca)

Committee Members

- QUFA Past President Mary C. (Cella) Olmstead (Psychology (FAS)) (Chair)
- QUFA Council Chair Margaret Pappano (English (FAS))
- QUFA President Karen Rudie (Electrical and Computing Engineering (FEAS))
- QUFA Continuing Adjunct Representative Chantal Brunette (Dan School of Drama and Music (FAS))
- Alastair Ferguson (Biomedical and Molecular Sciences (FHS))
- Louis Gagnon (Smith School of Business)
- Nicolas Hudon (Chemical Engineering (FEAS))
- Michael White (Library)
- Ashwini Vasanthakumar (Law)

Staff Support

- QUFA Executive Director Leslie Jermyn
- QUFA Associate Executive Director John (J.R.) Rose

protect the practice of conflating “pension-eligible class” with meeting PBA pension eligibility criteria. If they do decide to challenge the decision, we will keep you posted and will begin to strategize on how best to preserve this win for precarious workers across the province.

We will hold out hope that our pension administrators will work in good faith to implement what the regulator has told them to do.

We would love for the next headline to be “Pension Promise Delivered!”

Notes

¹In 2026, the YMPE (the amount you can earn a Canada Pension on) is

\$74,600, so 35% of that is \$26,110. Please note that employer-provided pensions can apply to much higher incomes.

²We benefitted from the expert legal advice and analysis of both Murray Gold and James Harnum at Koskie Minsky. James and his associates moved legal-argument mountains with the FSRA to get us over the final finish line. I am personally grateful for the attention he paid to the convoluted minutiae of classes of employment at Queen’s.

Leslie Jermyn can be reached at qufaed@queensu.ca.

FYI

Queen's Shockingly Poor Student/Faculty Ratio

We need a hundred new faculty members just to move up one spot

By Dan Cohen
Department of Geography and Planning

and Doug Nesbitt
Member Services Officer, QUFA

It will be no surprise to QUFA Members that the number of students per faculty member at Queen's University has grown dramatically, especially since the administration announced a hiring freeze in May 2023. That Queen's faculty serve more students than their Canadian counterparts is announced yearly in *Maclean's* University Rankings, where Queen's ranks 14th out of the 15 universities in its category. Its 35:1 student/faculty ratio (by *Maclean's* calculations) more than doubles the top university (Sherbrooke) at 14.8:1.¹

What might be more surprising to faculty is that the Bicentennial Vision views addressing its lagging student/faculty ratio as a poor use of resources in its goal of rising in international rankings. As the Bicentennial Vision's strategic planning documents highlight, Queen's is so far behind peer institutions that the resources it would take to rise one spot is seen as prohibitive:

The data show that Queen's has the third highest student/faculty ratio across U15 schools.... For context regarding the necessary changes in faculty numbers, the data indicate that if student numbers did not increase at Queen's, the institution would have to hire approximately 100 new faculty to achieve the same student/faculty ratio as the

U15 institution with the next highest value for this ratio. Doing this would translate into an improvement of 0.1 points in the total QS score, which would improve Queen's position in the QS rankings by 1.²

In fact, the numbers show that Queen's is moving backwards on this indicator. The number of Tenured and Tenure-Track faculty is now at 2014 levels (764 in 2014, 766 in 2025), while the number of undergraduates at Queen's has increased over that time by 5,956 students. This drop is the result of the combined effect of the hiring freeze with retirement incentives. Over the past three years, the number of Tenured and Tenure-Track faculty numbers has fallen by 68. As the latest financial figures show, Queen's spending on faculty salaries actually decreased last year despite the effect of individual salary increases.

This is despite that fact that Article 35.1.1 of the Collective Agreement states, "Subject to available funding, the University shall, during the currency of this Agreement, increase the Full-Time Equivalent of Tenure and Tenure-track faculty sufficient to decrease the weighted student/faculty ratio."³ With more Provincial funding incoming, including a recent announcement of \$104 million in new funding for undergraduate seats,⁴ and the operating budget in the positive even before investment income, it will be important that faculty be active in holding the administration to this commitment.

To understand changes to Queen's student/faculty ratio in detail, we undertook an analysis using QUFA's monthly roll of Members and the university's published enrolment reports.⁵ As you'll see in the figures below, since 2014 the undergraduate-student to full-time-instructor ratio has increased from 20.8:1 to 27.1:1, an increase of 32%. This change has,

in part, been driven by the rapid increase in the number of students in the Faculty of Health Sciences, which has seen a 143% increase in student/faculty ratio (from 11.4:1 to 27.7:1). However, even with Health Sciences omitted, the increase across the rest of the university remains at 20.6% (from 22.4:1 to 27.0:1).⁶

It is also important to note that this figure is likely to get worse. At a recent financial forum, the administration announced that the Province was funding 1,500 new seats at Queen's while also stating that hiring restrictions are still in place. If those seats are added without increasing faculty numbers, the student/faculty ratio would degrade to 28.8:1, an increase of 38% from 2014 levels.

Student/Faculty Ratio by the Numbers

Below you will find the student/faculty ratio for Queen's as a whole and each of the undergraduate-serving faculties or schools in order of size. Our calculation of the number of full-time faculty includes both Tenured and Tenure-track faculty, and Continuing Adjuncts with a full-time equivalency (FTE) of 0.5.

To calculate the student/faculty ratio we produced two sets of numbers:

- **"Enrolment"**: Undergraduate enrolment was gathered from the university's published enrolment reports and, for 2026, its enrolment plans.
- **"Instructors"**: To calculate faculty numbers, we used data reported to QUFA under Article 6.2. Full-time instructors were defined as Tenured faculty, Tenure-track faculty ("**T/TT**"), and Continuing Adjuncts with an FTE of 0.5 ("**Cont.**"). A 0.5 FTE represents the minimum FTE for a Continuing Adjunct with a full teaching load. All Continuing

Adjuncts under a 0.5 FTE and all Term Adjuncts were excluded. Other exclusions included cross-appointed RMC faculty and faculty on Long-Term Disability. These exclusions were imposed to produce a stable figure that measures change over time in full-time faculty and are not a comment on the relative importance of Term Adjunct labour in making the university work (which we recognize).

*For 2026, since actual enrolment figures are not available, we used the projected enrolment figures.

Notes

¹<https://macleans.ca/education/university-rankings/canadas-best-universities-in-2026-by-student-faculty-ratio/>

²<https://www.queensu.ca/principal/strategic-planning/bicentennial-vision/rankings>

³<https://qufa.ca/collective-agreement/>

⁴<https://www.queensu.ca/gazette/stories/ontario-invests-104-million-expand-undergraduate-student-seats-queen-s>

⁵<https://www.queensu.ca/registrar/re-sources/reports>

⁶Our numbers differ from *Maclean's* because we are only calculating the undergraduate student to faculty ratio and include Continuing Adjuncts in our count of full-time faculty members.

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QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026 *
Student/Instructor Ratio	20.8	21.4	22.8	23.6	23.7	23.3	23.8	24.5	25	24.6	25.2	27.2	27.1
Enrollment	17,763	18,356	18,725	19,386	20,048	20,469	21,457	22,162	22,521	22,994	23,549	23,719	23,433
Instructors	852	856	820	821	845	878	903	906	901	935	936	871	865
T/TT	762	769	736	735	757	790	808	815	807	830	824	764	753
Cont	90	87	84	86	88	88	95	91	94	105	112	107	112

FAS	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026 *
Student/Instructor Ratio	22.4	23.3	25.2	26.3	26.3	25.3	25.1	25.1	25.1	24.8	25.4	27.2	26
Enrollment	10,411	10,981	11,358	11,911	12,406	12,626	13,147	13,030	13,061	13,122	13,149	13,048	12,408
Instructors	464.9	471.5	450	453.5	472.5	500	523.5	519.5	519.5	528.5	517	480	477
T/TT	410.9	422.5	401	402.5	422.5	452	473.5	473.5	470.5	474.5	463	428	422
Cont	54	49	49	51	50	48	50	46	49	54	54	52	55

FEAS	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026 *
Student/Instructor Ratio	28.3	28.9	31.4	30	30.9	29.8	31.3	32.2	32.9	30.7	29.6	32.4	33.1
Enrollment	2,826	2,947	3,011	3,065	3,086	3,162	3,321	3,449	3,522	3,532	3,621	3,737	3,792
Instructors	100	102	96	102	100	106	106	107	107	115	122.5	115.5	114.5
T/TT	100	101	95	101	99	105	105	106	107	115	122.5	114.5	113.5
Cont	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1

HEALTH SCIENCES	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026 *
Student/Instructor Ratio	11.4	10.9	11.2	12.3	12.3	14.4	16.6	20	22.5	24.2	25.5	27.4	27.7
Enrollment	1,357	1,373	1,380	1,381	1,459	1,656	1,969	2,495	2,715	3,014	3,283	3,324	3,481
Instructors	118.7	125.6	123	112.5	118.5	115	118.5	124.5	120.5	124.5	128.5	121.5	125.5
T/TT	111.7	118.5	116	106.5	110.5	108	106.5	113.5	109.5	113.5	113.5	105.5	106.5
Cont	7	7.1	7	6	8	7	12	11	11	11	15	16	19

BUSINESS	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026 *
Student/Instructor Ratio	21.7	21.6	21.6	21.9	21.2	20.9	22.4	22.1	22	21.6	22.3	25.8	27.4
Enrollment	1,887	1,919	1,897	1,924	1,888	1,885	2,017	2,077	2,072	2,072	2,162	2,241	2,356
Instructors	87	89	88	88	89	90	90	94	94	96	97	87	86
T/TT	68	68	68	68	67	67	65	68	69	72	74	70	69
Cont	19	21	20	20	22	23	25	26	25	24	23	17	17

EDUCATION	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026 *
Student/Instructor Ratio	20.2	17.6	17.6	17.4	21.3	17.8	13	19.2	19.4	18.2	18.3	20.7	23.7
Enrollment	726	544	476	506	597	535	391	498	523	620	694	703	735
Instructors	36	30.9	27	29	28	30	30	26	27	34	38	34	31
T/TT	27	23	21	24	23	24	25	21	20	21	22	17	15
Cont	9	7.9	6	5	5	6	5	5	7	13	16	17	16

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Is Potable Water Safe at Queen's?

Some QUFA Members have expressed concern about the safety of potable water in Queen's aging buildings, so we conducted an experiment to see just how safe campus drinking water is

By Diane Beauchemin
Equity Representative, QUFA

After hearing via QUFA that a high concentration of lead had been measured in tap water from Miller Hall and that several QUFA Members were concerned and feared for their health, I decided to make checking the safety of water on campus a project for an undergraduate thesis. One student worked on this project during Summer 2025. Unfortunately, the results were inconclusive because the student did not validate the analysis method before applying it to collected samples. I thus got another student to repeat the study in Fall and Winter 2025-2026, ensuring that the analysis method was first validated.

Samples were collected from sixteen buildings across the main campus, which were constructed at different times between 1879 (Theological Hall) and 1994 (Stauffer Library), as the breakdown of pipes, fixtures, and plumbing materials can lead to copper (Cu), iron (Fe), and lead (Pb) being released into the water.¹ Water was collected from both a water fountain and sink on the same floor of each building. Other elements monitored include arsenic (As), cadmium (Cd), chromium (Cr), and selenium (Se). Those seven elements were chosen because of their documented toxicity or potential to cause health impacts at low levels or affect the visual quality of water.²

Water sampling was conducted at the beginning of the week to account for potential stagnation over the weekend. The buildings were sampled

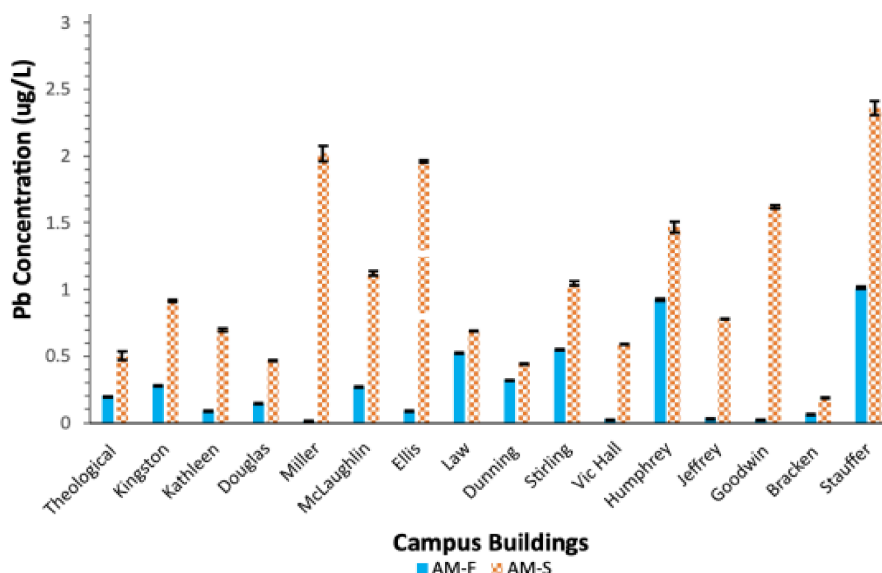


Figure 1. Comparison of Pb concentration in AM samples from water fountain (F) and sink (S) sources⁴

at 8.00 a.m., when there were no signs of use, and at 5.00 p.m. on the same day, when all the sampling locations had been used. All the measured concentrations of the elements in all samples respected Health Canada's Canadian Drinking Water Quality Guidelines. Given that Cd, As, Cr, and Se come from anthropogenic sources and are removed by Kingston's water treatment plant (which was verified in this work), this study looked for evidence of possible contamination connected to the aging infrastructure, which would affect the concentrations of Fe, Cu, and Pb. For example, a plumbing system with Pb service lines, solder or brass faucets in buildings built before 1985 (i.e., all but one of the buildings sampled), may contaminate the water with Pb.³ However, no correlation with building age was observed. On the other hand, water from the filtered fountains had a lower concentration of Cu and Pb than water from the sinks, as exemplified by Pb in Figure 1 (similar results were obtained for samples collected in the evening).

Flushing of sinks for up to five minutes before sampling may

decreased the concentration of Cu and is thus not sufficient to improve water quality. Adding filters to sink tap outlets would likely be more efficient.

In conclusion, the drinking water collected during the winter on Queen's campus is safe. A separate study should be conducted during the summer months to investigate the effect of increased temperatures and reduced water demand on stagnation and mobilization of trace elements in the water system.

Notes

¹*Metals in Water*. Elsevier, 2023, pp. 111-27.

²Ö. T. Dede. *Analytical Methods*. vol. 8, 2016, pp. 5087-94.

³Health Canada. *Water Talk: Lead in Drinking Water*.

⁴L. Griffin, CHEM 497 Undergraduate Thesis. Queen's University, 2026.

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FYI

Higher Costs and Longer Delays?

The Queen's Preferred Supplier Requirement

By John (JR) Rose

Associate Executive Director, QUFA

Over the past several months, QUFA Members have received correspondence from Queen's University indicating that the Procurement Policy¹ has been updated with a stronger Preferred Supplier requirement. The Policy defines a Preferred Supplier as "a company who has qualified through a competitive process with whom the University has a formalized relationship for a set of goods or services," and it notes that "Where a Preferred Supplier exists for the good or service being procured, the good or service must be procured from the Preferred Supplier."

This past Spring, Members began contacting QUFA with concerns about this requirement. In response, QUFA asked for more Member feedback in the July and August editions of *QUFA Digest* to help guide an investigation of rights and responsibilities on acquiring materials for research and teaching. One of the major concerns is about increased cost of goods, as Members have indicated that goods were often more expensive from a Preferred Supplier than their usual supplier (one Member indicated it was *ten times* more expensive). Another frustration stems from Members knowing that they can get immediate access to goods from local suppliers in Kingston, but the Preferred Supplier requirement is a barrier to purchasing from local vendors. Some Members have indicated that they had to wait a month or more to access equipment they could have purchased immediately from a local supplier, and that the equipment purchased

through Preferred Suppliers is often less reliable and of poorer quality.

Exceptions to the Preferred Supplier requirement (obtaining goods from a company outside the employer's list) must be approved by Strategic Procurement Services, and Members have indicated that this has caused increased paperwork, bureaucracy, and delays in accessing goods. Members noted that they had to send several e-mails to Queen's and suppliers, fill out forms, and comb through stock lists to prove whether a Preferred Supplier carried the equipment they needed. In these situations, the administrative work fell to the Members rather than the employer, who designed the system. Members feel there is an increased administrative burden placed on them, and have described the system as disjointed and inconsistent.

In addition to cost and delays, Members have questions about transparency, expressing interest in why certain suppliers are chosen as preferred, rather than suppliers that could provide more affordable, accessible, or reliable goods. They also raised questions about how Tri-Agency finance guidelines might conflict with a Preferred Supplier requirement that leads to high costs for goods.

It is important to note that Members build relationships with suppliers, and they have schedules and specific needs worked out so that protocols (regarding equipment, agreements, etc.) are properly maintained through timely deliveries. When those suppliers are no longer deemed Preferred, this can cause delays and scheduling issues that can put those protocols in jeopardy.

What can QUFA do to help? In Ontario, an employer can manage their workplace as they see fit unless they contravene a Collective Agreement (CA) or labour law. If we turn to the Queen's-QUFA CA,² there

is one area that deals with acquisition of materials and academic freedom.

Article 14.2 states:

Academic freedom includes the following interacting freedoms: freedom to teach, freedom to research, freedom to publish, freedom of expression, *freedom to acquire materials*. Academic freedom ensures that ... (b) Members have the freedom to carry out scholarly research without reference or adherence to prescribed doctrine.... (e) Members have the *freedom to exercise professional judgement in the acquisition of materials*, and in ensuring that these materials are freely accessible to all for bona fide teaching and research purposes, no matter how controversial these materials may be. (emphasis added)

QUFA is considering the potential impact of this language on requirements imposed by the employer to Members accessing the most appropriate, reliable, and cost-effective goods. If the employer is intent on saving money and emphasizing research, why are QUFA Members indicating that the Preferred Supplier requirement is costing them more money and creating barriers or delays in acquiring materials essential for research? QUFA continues to investigate, including assembling the necessary information to inform a grievance assessment. Please send any comments or concerns to qufa@queensu.ca.

Notes

¹<https://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/administration-and-operations/procurement-policy>

²<https://qufa.ca/collective-agreement/>

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GRIEVANCE CORNER

Transparency and Consultation

An update on an association grievance defending transparency and consultation commitments

By Karen Sisson
Grievance Officer, QUFA

A May 2026 edition of *QUFA Digest* provided notice of an association grievance claiming that the Administration had breached meaningful consultation and information-sharing commitments described in “Attachment B” of the 25 April 2025 “Memorandum of Agreement with Respect to All Matters Relating to the Negotiation of a Rollover Agreement” (“the Rollover MOA”), and the QUFA Collective Agreement (CA).

The information triggering the grievance was brought to QUFA’s attention following the April 2026 Senate meeting. At that meeting, the Provost’s report included a Notice of Motion (NOM) identifying the Administration’s interest in obtaining the Senate’s agreement to recommend that the University’s Board of Trustees “create a new entity to be called a College, which will be situated within a faculty,” to “create a new governing body for a College to be called an Academic Council,” to amend the Senate’s Purpose and Functions, to amend the Faculty of Arts and Science’s Faculty Board functions, and to approve the creation of a College of Computer Science and an Academic Council for that college. The detailed NOM contained several additional definitions and guidelines pertaining to the operation and governance of the anticipated “new entity,” including delegating the authority typically exercised by faculty boards to an “Academic Council” (membership undefined), directives that the anticipated “new entity” would be headed by an Associate Dean, and that departmentalization would be prohibited.

This NOM came as a surprise to QUFA and many QUFA Members. QUFA was especially surprised because Administration representatives had been meeting and corresponding regularly with QUFA representatives as a means of fulfilling the Rollover MOA commitments, yet QUFA had not received any notice whatsoever of this substantial academic planning. QUFA was also alarmed to receive reports of comments made by the Provost during the Senate meeting that may have suggested an effort to circumvent consultation requirements based on arbitrary factors.

QUFA was compelled to grieve the Administration’s conduct because of the clear and serious implications to the integrity of the Rollover MOA, the integrity of labour relations, and the integrity of QUFA’s role as the exclusive bargaining agent. QUFA had successfully negotiated the terms requiring “timely and meaningful consultation with the Association and its Members” and was clear during those negotiations that such transparency was a fundamental component of reaching the agreement. QUFA also relied on those promises in good faith when communicating with the Membership about any perceived implications of entering the Rollover MOA in lieu of bargaining during the 2025-2026 academic year.

After the grievance was filed, the parties met for candid discussion at a Step 1 grievance meeting. At the same time, many Senators who are also QUFA Members requested additional details, including information related to maintaining the integrity of collegial governance structures, and other concerns. In response to the Senate discussions, the Office of the Provost decided to withdraw the NOM and facilitate information and consultation sessions with QUFA Members and other members of the Queen’s community about the proposed planning. It is QUFA’s understanding that the motion regarding the creation of a “College” has subsequently been withdrawn permanently.

QUFA has received assurances from the Administration that the creation of any anticipated “new entity” is not intended to undermine, contravene, or otherwise conflict with rights and procedures contained in the CA. QUFA has also been assured that information regarding any future planning for similar “new entities” will be disclosed to QUFA with sufficient notice to permit a full assessment of any implications to CA rights and procedures.

The next step in the grievance process is QUFA deciding whether to refer the grievance to Step 2. Certain points of information require confirmation from the Administration before QUFA can fully assess its position, but it is possible that QUFA will withdraw the grievance on a “without prejudice” basis in lieu of referring the matter forward. That is because the failure to meet consultation and information-sharing commitments may be adequately remedied by the consultation and information-sharing opportunities provided over the summer months. The decision to permanently withdraw the motion following the Senate discussions and information sessions may mean that questions, feedback, and debate arising since the NOM will be carefully considered and incorporated into future academic planning.

When it comes to repairing the harm these events may have caused for labour relations, there is no remedy an arbitrator could order that would immediately repair injury to QUFA’s sense of trust in the Administration. Repairing that trust will require time and mutual effort towards demonstrating respect, open communication, and genuine interest in cooperative problem solving between the parties. Such efforts are foundational to promoting fair working conditions.

Anyone with information or questions pertaining to the above is invited to contact me directly.

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