



**EMPLOYEE RELATIONS
PLAN
2016**

INTRODUCTION

In 2014, our President, Cheryl Jensen, embarked on her Listening Tour to understand the opportunities and challenges facing our College. One of the opportunities identified through that process was a focus on Union-Management Relations. The opportunity was captured in the President's Listening Tour final report as follows:

“Faculty, staff and administrators all raised the opportunity that surrounds improved labour relations. They recognized that the current combative approach serves neither side well and expressed a sincere hope that both sides would begin to work collaboratively. Those who raised the topic talked wishfully about the opportunity that constructive relations could bring to the College and our students.”

Significant work has taken place to seriously address this opportunity and to provide a path forward for Algonquin College in order to more meaningfully engage with our union partners, in a way that is sustainable over time. The entire leadership team and management group worked together to develop a vision statement and guiding principles that will guide our discussions with our partners. The result of that work is the development of this Employee Relations Plan.

The Employee Relations Plan is a living document that is subject to change based on the dynamic nature of the labour relations environment and to reflect that changes will evolve over time as the Plan is actioned.

The high level of participation in the development of this Plan and the formulation of the path to move forward was an encouraging sign of the commitment of everyone involved to take on this work with open minds and a sustained commitment to realize positive change in Union-Management relations.

The Employee Relations Plan is ambitious, but one that we believe is worth the investment in order to create the necessary cultural shift at all levels within Algonquin College and with our union partners and stakeholders. It should be noted that many of the initiatives proposed are from the perspective of all levels of management.

As our union partners become involved in this new approach, the initiatives and recommendations must remain flexible and open to change based on their input and engagement. This document may be revised at any time through this consultative process, in the best interests of all parties.

VISION

Algonquin College will be known for its productive union-management relations within a culture of pro-active and respectful joint-problem solving to support all employees and promote student success.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

As partners, we will be guided by the following principles:

1. **FACT-BASED PROBLEM SOLVING.** Decisions are made using mutually agreed facts.
2. **TRANSPARENCY.** Information is shared to enhance common understanding and awareness.
3. **INCLUSIVITY.** Input is sought from all stakeholders regarding important business decisions.
4. **ACCOUNTABILITY.** Responsible for behaviours, decisions, and actions.
5. **FOCUSED ON INTERESTS.** Centered on the needs that are most important to all of us.

2016/2017 Goals

1. Managers are prepared and equipped to solve problems.
2. Managers understand where to find information and how to use it in order to make decisions.
3. Managers assign work and workload in a manner consistent with the collective agreement.
4. Managers take a leadership role in building and maintaining a positive union-management relationship.

Goal 1: Managers are prepared and equipped to solve problems.

1A - Delivery of targeted training program for all managers.

Development and delivery of a 7-module training program to all college managers that includes both skills training (SWFs, Salary Calculations, Classification) and competencies training (Communication, Problem Solving, Relationship Building, Trust). The purpose of this training is to (a) better equip managers to resolve issues and improve employee/labour relations within their own departments, both with employees and union representatives, and also to provide them with the tactical skills and knowledge regarding key issues in order to do so. Each module is delivered in half-day sessions for a total of 3.5 days of training for all academic managers and 2.5 days of training for non-academic managers. ACET and ACLT members will be included in training.

OPSEU Locals 415 and 416 Executive Committees will be invited to attend the sessions jointly with management staff.

SHORT-TERM

1B - Additional support provided to managers by HR, LR, and Executive/Leadership Teams, and peer networks.

During consultation phases with the leadership team and management group, a consistent theme from participants was that they required more support in order to address issues in their departments in a timely and effective manner.

Support can mean different things to different people. Broadly, feedback indicated that effective support included the ability for managers to have timely access to key individuals in order to obtain input and feedback regarding challenges they are facing on a daily basis. Effective support also meant that managers were given permission to apply their problem solving skills in a safe environment where they are then given constructive feedback.

Key supporting individuals include:

1. ACLT representatives - for regular access, mentoring, and advice on people management issues;
2. ACET representatives - for advice regarding area-wide or college-wide people management issues;
3. Peer Networks - for general support and sharing of best-practices regarding common issues and approaches on a variety of issues, both formally (e.g., Chairs Council) and informally (e.g., Peer Mentoring);
4. HR experts - for advice and consultation regarding matters of policy and people management issues; and,
5. LR experts - for advice on complex matters and/or matters related to labour and employee relations, most often in person and in advance of formal meetings with union representatives.

**MEDIUM-TERM
AND
ONGOING**

1C - Clarification of roles and responsibilities of those within the organization (LR, HR, managers) and those external to the organization (unions, provincial partners) as it relates to Employee Relations.

As we move forward with the Employee Relations Vision and Guiding Principles, it will be important for all stakeholders to understand the roles and responsibilities of those involved, both as it pertains to our own internal resources and those external to college management. Understanding these intra-organizational and inter-organizational drivers will better equip all parties to engage with one another more productively, with reduced duplication of effort and greater respect for the role of the other party. With respect to our union partners, the College will seek out and encourage formal and informal opportunities to exchange information regarding roles and responsibilities generally, in order to increase shared understanding and appreciation about how best to engage in joint problem solving strategies.

Within the management structure, there needs to be clarification of the roles within HR and the line manager as it relates to people management issues. Further to Recommendation 1-B, the role of the Dean/Director needs to be articulated as a support person to the manager in this regard. By doing so, an accountability framework is established which will guide how we approach and manage our people related matters. Identification of core leadership competencies will also inform management job design, recruitment practices, orientation, and professional development.

This process will be iterative and informed based on ongoing consultation, feedback, and/or grievance and arbitration activity.

**MEDIUM-TERM
AND
ONGOING**

Goal 2: Managers understand where to find information and how to use it in order to make decisions.

2A- Delivery of targeted training program for all managers.

See 1-A.

SHORT-TERM

2B - Complementing the Initiative/Action 2C, consult with a small sample of key operational representatives in order to determine additional resources or data sources which could be developed for managers on issues related to Employee Relations and/or Human Resources.

Through conversations or small focus groups of key stakeholders (including OPSEU Locals 415 and 416), an HR resource may be assigned to create a list of resources which are currently not available, but would be beneficial, to college managers as they manage people issues on a day-to-day basis. These resources could be the form of documents, website content, or other references, and would allow managers to access information on an as-needed basis and independently – without necessarily having to access HR or LR subject matter experts in order to obtain basic or standardized information or direction.

MEDIUM-TERM

2C - Identification of existing information and data sources from across the college related to key employee relations and HR issues; collation and communication to college managers regarding same.

There are many resources that exist in the college which would assist managers in addressing employee relations and HR issues in their department. Managers may be unaware that these resources are available, they may not know where to find them, or they may have outdated versions. Providing managers with a current listing of up-to-date resources and data sources should assist them in identifying possible solutions independently or with limited intervention from other support persons. Common references and sources will assist with a more consistent college-wide approach on tactical issues.

In order to ensure transparency, OPSEU Locals 415 and 416 will be provided with an opportunity to submit input regarding processes and/or publicly available resources which may have a direct impact on them or their membership.

LONG-TERM

Goal 3: Managers assign work and workload in a manner consistent with the collective agreement.

3A - See 1-A, specifically the delivery of targeted training program for all managers in the areas of (1) SWFs, (2) Salary Calculations, and (3) Classification.

These specific skills-focused training modules will be offered to all college managers over the course of three half-days. Designed to address key areas of concern identified by OPSEU Locals 415 and 416, managers will be provided with the necessary tactical skills in order to assign work and workload in compliance with applicable provisions of the collective agreements, the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, and college policies. Multiple sessions will be offered in partnership with the Deans for all Chairs with best practices and norms in each of the schools and faculties being discussed. These sessions will be complemented by the other four competency-based training modules.

OPSEU Local 415 and 416 Executive Committees will be invited to attend the sessions jointly with management staff.

SHORT-TERM

3B - Creation of an accountability framework for SWF assignments.

In order to ensure that Academic Managers are properly supported in assigning academic workload, and commencing with the next round of workload assignments, the Deans will put a mechanism in place to ensure accuracy of assignments.

Following completion, the SWFs shall be submitted by normal process to Human Resources, where they will be reviewed in a timely manner by the assigned resource in order to ensure compliance with college-wide requirements. The HR resource will be accountable to identify and track inconsistencies, errors, and/or frequent issues raised by the union in order to better inform the process at all levels. The HR resource will be able to produce metrics for ACET upon request.

SHORT-TERM

Goal 4: Managers take a leadership role in building and maintaining a positive union-management relationship.

4A - Delivery of targeted training program for all managers.

See 1-A.

SHORT-TERM

4B - Inclusion of an Employee Relations-focused goal for all 2016/17 performance contracts for Administrators.

Building on the guiding principle of Accountability, the inclusion of an Employee Relations-focused goal in all 2016/17 performance contracts is a signal to the organization and our union partners that this issue is being taken seriously at all levels of management. Managers should build outcomes and metrics in such a way as to demonstrate how they are taking a leadership role within their own departments, both with employees and union representatives, in order to realize the Vision set out by ACET.

SHORT-TERM

4C - Request the re-establishment of academic joint union-management committees under the collective agreement.

The academic collective agreement provides for two local joint union-management committees - the College Employment Stability Fund (CESC), which addresses issues related to job security and layoff, and the Union College Committee (UCC), which is a forum for broad discussion on issues arising from the collective agreement which impact on the bargaining unit and/or the union-management relationship. Both of these committees have been dormant for several years and their re-establishment could provide a forum for productive discussion of issues that impact both the college and the union without having to resort to the grievance/arbitration process. Note: Both the CESC and the UCC committees operate successfully with OPSEU Local 416 and have increased the level of communication and our ability to resolve issues generally between the parties.

MEDIUM-TERM

4D - HR (Labour Relations) report will be provided to ACET and ACLT on a quarterly basis.

In keeping with the guiding principles of Transparency and Fact-Based Problem Solving, Labour Relations will provide a quarterly update to the Executive and Leadership Teams regarding key metrics and trends with the purpose of informing executive decision making and monitoring progress. The update shall also include discussion regarding emerging issues and labour relations strategies that are relevant to the Executive Team and Leadership Team. Sample metrics could include: grievances filed per bargaining unit, individual vs union grievance numbers, status of grievances (e.g., settled, withdrawn, referred to arbitration), ongoing arbitrations, etc. The purpose of the report will be to inform executive strategy and decision making as it relates to issues that may impact on union partners and stakeholders and to monitor progress.

MEDIUM-TERM

4E - Creation of a "Collaboration Space" for employee relations activities.

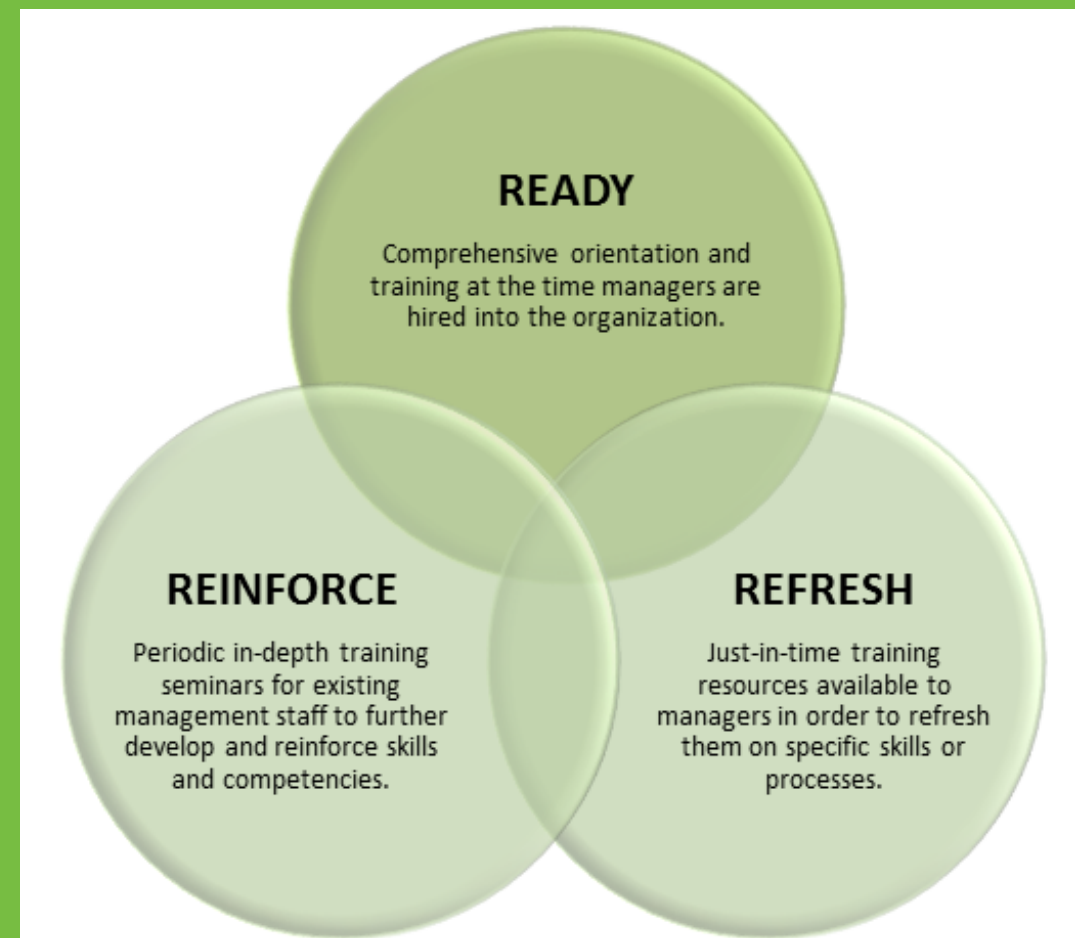
Leadership team and Management group feedback indicated that access to labour relations experts and Human Resource Officers for face-to-face meetings is something that is not resourced appropriately at the present time. This included the ability to meet in advance of formal meetings with our union partners in a safe and private environment where cases can be freely discussed. It also included a confidential space where managers might potentially meet with employees and/or union representatives to problem-solve sensitive issues related to labour and employee relations. Generally speaking, Labour Relations books dozens of meetings across the College each week but does not have dedicated meeting space, which often results in meetings being held in less-than-ideal locations and within tightly constrained periods of time.

The idea of a dedicated Collaboration Space, which would include office and private meeting space, would enable Labour Relations and Human Resources Officers to conduct the necessary meetings with managers, employees, and union partners in order to attempt to resolve issues face-to-face and earlier in the process. A physical space in which the work of employee relations could operate would increase the quantity and quality of support which could be provided to college managers.

MEDIUM-TERM


EMPLOYEE RELATIONS TRAINING PLAN

A need for a universal management training program in the areas of employee/labour relations and people management was identified as crucial to the success of this plan. Three distinct but complementary training delivery formats – largely related to the timing of the training – that will contribute to long-term success.




The short-time goal of training within this plan is focused on a “Reinforce” delivery model, where existing staff are provided with in-depth seminars and workshops to build capacity for skills and competencies that need to be created or expanded. The content will then be modified in the context of a more robust training and development model for the future, in order to be delivered in the “Ready” and “Refresh” formats.

SKILLS TRAINING




Module 1:
Standard Workload Forms (SWFs)

Designed for all academic managers*, this workshop will cover a review of Article 11 requirements, how to complete a SWF, the SWF assignment process, and the WMG/WRA process. Managers will understand the importance of ensuring accurate and consistent SWF completion and what resources are available.



Module 2:
Salary Calculations

Designed for all academic managers*, this workshop will provide an in-depth review of starting step placement calculations and the requirements of the collective agreement. Managers will be able to practice using samples and will be coached on best practices for a review of experience and credentials as it relates to discussions with job applicants.



Module 3:
Classification

Designed for all college managers, this workshop will provide an overview of the purpose and structure of the Position Description Form (PDF) for Support Staff. Managers will understand the function of the pointing process as a broader compensation structure in the CAAT system. Managers will be provided with sample PDFs in order to develop analytical and critical thinking skills, best practices related to PDF updates will be reviewed, and the arbitration process will be discussed.

*Although designed for academic managers, registration will not be restricted.

COMPETENCY TRAINING



Module 4: Relationship Building

This module explores the labour-management relationship, asking participants to think about the relationships they currently have against five defined types, to imagine what a more productive relationship might look like, what it would take to accomplish that and why it matters. The kind of relationship will have a direct impact on the parties' ability to get things done and to meet the needs of their respective constituents.



Module 5: Establishing Trust

This module would introduce participants to an approach to understanding trust that leads them to sort characteristics into four categories: sincerity, reliability, competence and care. The categories serve as criteria for assessing how trustworthy someone is. Participants would be asked to reflect on their own trustworthiness measured against criteria and what they might do to model the behaviour they'd like to see from their counterparts. Strategies for increasing trust will be reviewed and practiced in a safe environment.



Module 6: Problem Solving

Through this module, participants will learn to appreciate the difference between a position and an interest. By clearly understanding the reasoning behind and value of uncovering their own interests as well as those of the other party, problem solving capacity is increased. Participants will be introduced to a step by step process to reach agreements that meets the needs of the parties by placing emphasis on finding common ground before working the problem through to an agreement.



Module 7: Communication Skills

This module would explore communication strategies aimed at improving the overall quality of communication, i.e. that the message sent is received as intended. It would highlight the challenges of relying solely on spoken words to communicate and identify the other cues people use to interpret the message being sent. It would explore common barriers to effective communication and emphasize the value of listening actively, using paraphrasing, clarifying and summarizing techniques. It would also explore the art of crafting powerful yet neutral questions aimed at bringing clarity and understanding to an issue.

