

## President's Message: [There is Power in a Union](#)

Julia Wright, DFA President, 2019-20



In 2002-03, 73.57% of Dalhousie's budget was spent on the "Academic Responsibility Centre," the category for direct spending on the academic mission. By 2014-15, it had dropped to 61.89%. It then increased slightly for each of the next three years to 64.70% in 2017-18. In 2018-19, we lost almost all of those gains in one fell swoop and academic spending dropped to 62.53% of the university budget (see graph on page 3). Yet our enrolments now are much higher than they were in the first years of the century.

We all know what this financial story has meant for many of our departments and schools: larger class sizes, higher tuition for our students, fewer continuing colleagues, less research support and unit-level staff, and so on, as well as frayed nerves and exhausted colleagues. "There is power in a union," as Billy Bragg put it, only because we stand together. Go to the Budget Advisory Committee consultations this year and make your voices heard in defense of the academic mission and decent working conditions for all of us. Come to our meeting on ~~March 18<sup>th</sup>~~ about the next round of collective bargaining. The DFA is all of you, and the DFA needs all of you to help make Dalhousie the kind of thriving, functioning university we all know it can be.

That's the public story. There are other stories that many of us don't hear—because they happen to people we don't know, in other units, and those of us who do know those stories have to keep them confidential. But they are a significant part of the work the DFA office does, year in and year out.

We of course have regular meetings in the DFA office: with our representatives on various committees, including the Employee Benefits Advisory Committee that recently recommended some [enhancements to our benefits](#) because of some cost savings in the plan, and with the administration through the [Association Board Committee](#). But almost every week we are also busy trying to help individual Members with various problems connected to their work here at Dalhousie.

I have to be careful in order to protect confidentiality, so this will all be rather vague. In most cases, this work involves the President, President-Elect, and Professional Officer, or some subset thereof, with further support, as needed, from the Executive and other committee members as well as other fantastic office staff. Our work with individual Members can be loosely divided into four categories, organized here to begin with the most formal processes:

**Grievances:** these are cases where we believe there was a clear violation of an article or articles in the Collective Agreement. The grievance process is laid out in the Collective Agreement with tight timelines from becoming aware of the problem to taking it forward. Our Grievance Committee works on these cases when they are not resolved at an informal stage, including deciding on next steps. If they are not resolved, they may continue to Arbitration, subject to the recommendation

**DATE CHANGE!**  
General Meeting moved to Thursday, March 26. Details on p.3

of the Grievance Committee and the approval of the Executive Committee.

**Discipline:** these are cases where a Member stands accused of misconduct and goes through a process laid out in the Collective Agreement. There are different versions of the process, but it is always serious and we advise Members and work towards the best possible outcome.

**Advocacy:** there are quite a few cases where Members have a concern about working conditions or decisions that affect their work at the University, say workload issues or a policy that is inconsistent with the Collective Agreement or an emergency situation. These often involve meetings with a Dean or university committee to work together on solutions.

**Advising:** this work generally stays in the DFA office, and can range from a 5-minute call to the DFA Professional Officer, to a few e-mails back and forth with me, to a meeting in the office to talk through more complex matters, say, collegial governance or workplace climate.

The Collective Agreement protects us all, but these four kinds of cases are often where we can make the biggest difference in the working lives of DFA Members—one at a time.

Since becoming President-Elect in May 2018, I've been involved in meetings with well over forty faculty members under the above headings, most in the second two categories. Some situations I've learned about are likely to arise in any workplace. But many are directly caused, at least in part, by that financial story with which I began: scarcity of resources aren't just testing our resilience and our programs, but are also contributing to truly unsustainable, unreasonable working conditions for some of our Members.

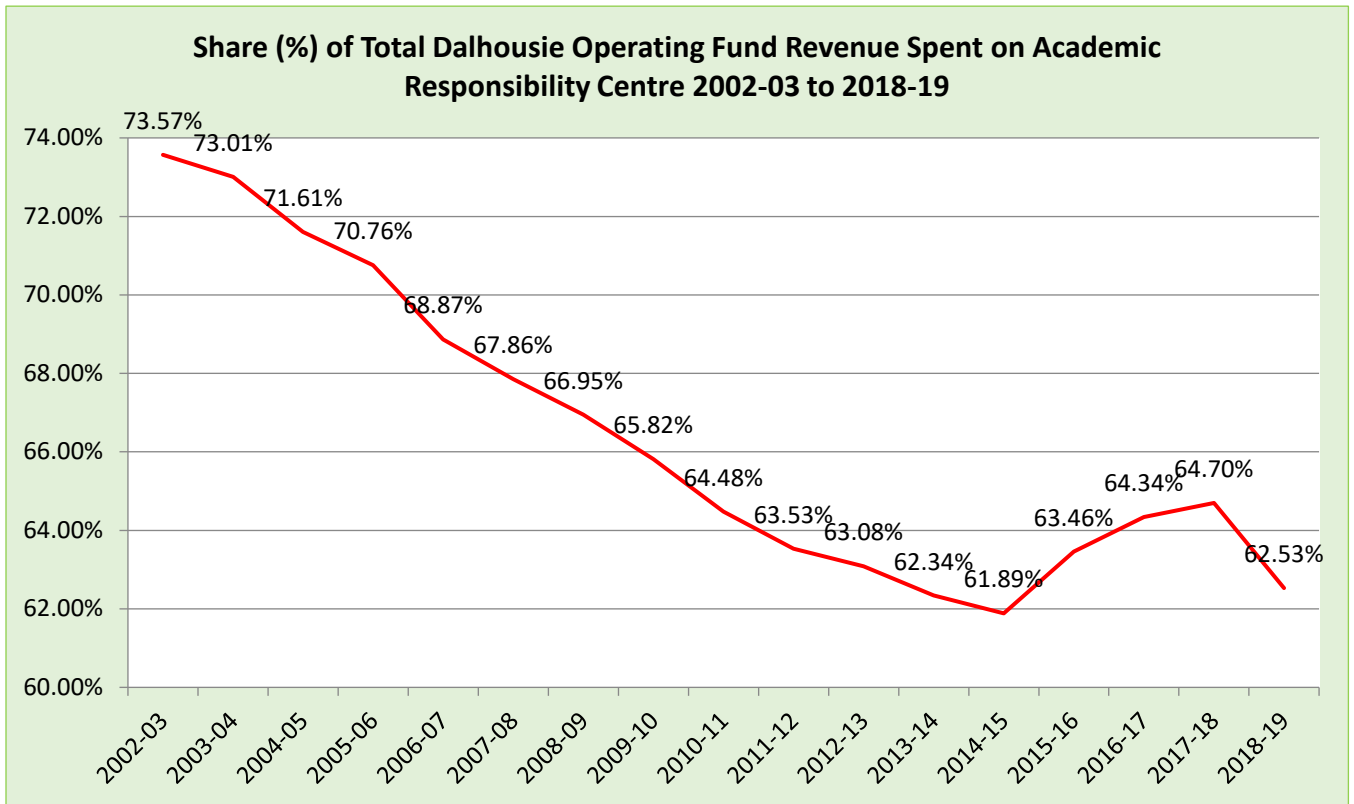
Often the basic story is this: a vulnerable DFA Member is being inappropriately pressured to solve a financial shortfall for an administrator by doing significantly more work (e.g., more marking, more classes, more difficult prep because of a significant expertise mismatch, classroom conditions that raise physical challenges, etc.). Some end up on stress leave because it's so bad; others can't go on stress leave, because it's that bad; a significant majority somehow keep working, but we see how hard it is. If I were giving details just on these, I'd be naming six different Faculties—and those are only the cases that I've heard about directly. The stories I've heard, and faces I've seen, are what fuel my frustration with the [Workplace Wellness](#) boondoggle, university spending on [executive search consultants](#) and higher-education consultants such as [EAB](#), and careless [BAC reports](#). Better management of university funds could solve many of the problems I see before they start by ensuring adequate numbers of continuing DFA Members to do the work required to properly and reasonably maintain our academic programs, libraries, and counselling services.

The fall of the percentage of the Dalhousie budget that goes to the Academic Responsibility Centre is not just numbers on a page. It is actually harming our Members, in many cases quite significantly, as well as our academic programs and our students. This is what we see in the DFA office every week, and it is the reason that we have spent so much time in recent years—[and months](#)—talking about the [Budget Advisory Committee process](#) and [investigating university finances](#). Budgets are about priorities. For any union, people are the priority. For any academic union, the academic mission is fundamental to that priority. For Dalhousie to function better, as a university and as an academic workplace, the university budget needs to better reflect that same priority.

Those of us in the DFA office will continue to do everything we can to find remedies for individual Members while advocating for systemic

solutions, but we all need to raise our voices for those solutions or the gravity of the situation will continue to be ignored by the decision-makers who could implement positive change.

Please contact me anytime, [Julia.Wright@dal.ca](mailto:Julia.Wright@dal.ca), or the DFA office at [dfa@dal.ca](mailto:dfa@dal.ca).



## DFA General Meeting

The DFA is holding a meeting of **all Bargaining Unit Members** on ~~Wednesday, March 18, 2020~~ **Thursday, March 26 at 7 pm**. Please make every effort to attend as we will be presenting and discussing DFA's proposals for the upcoming round of collective bargaining. Members of the DFA's Executive and bargaining team will be there to answer questions and discuss next steps.

~~Wednesday, March 18, 2020 @ 7:00 pm~~

~~Halifax: CHEB 170~~

~~Truro: (videoconference) Haley 254~~

~~Saint John (videoconference): DMNB 218~~

### DATE/LOCATION CHANGE!

General Meeting now set for  
to Thursday, March 26, 2020 @ 7 pm

Halifax: Tupper Theatre A

Truro: Haley 254

Saint John: DMNB 218

## DFA Holds Second Dr. Robert S. Rodger Lecture Series

On Tuesday, February 4, 2020, the DFA held the second annual lecture of the Dr. Robert S. Rodger Lecture Series. Ray Larkin, QC, was the 2019-20 speaker for the series, established by the DFA in November 2018. With more than 40 years of experience representing the DFA, Ray has supported us and our Members through several arbitrations, provided counsel on day-to-day issues, and has been the DFA's chief negotiator for three rounds of collective bargaining.

Ray spoke about the collective bargaining climate in the 1970s, around the time of DFA's certification. Dr. Robert Rodger was instrumental in creating the DFA's first collective agreement. In his address, Ray commented on that agreement, saying it "was a unique achievement in collective bargaining in Nova Scotia," for the collective agreement's recognition of the importance of collegial governance and the academic mission to academic working conditions.

Ray's keynote address was followed by an informative panel on collegial governance, featuring Dr. Rohini Bannerjee, Vice-President of Saint Mary's University Faculty Union, and Dr. Julia Wright, DFA's President. Thank you to Ray, Julia and Rohini for their time and expertise.



*Dr. Robert Rodger (left) and Ray Larkin*



*Dr. Julia Wright (left) and Dr. Rohini Bannerjee*

## African Heritage Month 2020 Ties that Bind: Faith, Family and Community

February is African Heritage Month in Nova Scotia and a number of our Members are conducting research and teaching on this important subject. For more, see [Remembering a Community Destroyed](#) and [this article](#) submitted to the DFA in 2019. [Click here](#) to learn about African Heritage Month.

## A Cause for Discomfort - Wrapping Up African Heritage Month

by DFA Member Dr. Chris Simms, Assistant Professor, School of Health Administration, Faculty of Health Professions

In the years I lived in East and West Africa, most of the racism against black Africans that I witnessed was between (a) international financial institutions (IFIs) and their client governments; (b) ex-pat donors and local communities; (c) white and black citizens where vestiges of the colonial era persisted – especially

in white settler states and; (d) transnational corporations and vulnerable populations - mining companies having among the most appalling [records](#).

In the British newspaper, the Guardian, I've looked at the records of the IFIs on [racial](#)

[inequalities](#) in staffing, human rights and [forced removals](#) of vulnerable groups including the bulldozing of homes that stood in the way of development. Deep racial inequalities in World Bank staffing in Washington, DC have beleaguered the institution for decades and influenced who they helped and who they ignored. A recent [report](#) by the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights adds to claims that the Bank eschews human rights and describes it institutionally as “a human rights-free zone”. Over a 10-year period it has uprooted more than three million people - actions I found similar to those taken by the Asian Development Bank – [forced removals](#) without due compensation.

In contrast to the rest of Sub-Sahara Africa, South Africa was a twilight zone of oppression and poverty. For the time I lived there (in the early 1990s after Nelson Mandela had been freed from Robben Island, but before the end of apartheid), the daily back-and-forth was replete with ongoing stories of fear, violence, torture and death. Fifty years of apartheid saw legislated segregation, hand-over of 80% of land to whites, bannings and pass laws. Between 1961 and 1994, 3.5 million people were uprooted from their homes and placed on Bantu Lands and thrust into poverty and hopelessness.

In all of the above, what I didn't see, could not feel, could not know was what I had not experienced - the certain impact of racism on individuals, families and communities denied access to public goods, protection of human rights and deprived of the ways and means to object. The unknowable was the humiliation of humiliation, to explain to one's children, for example, that justice was out of reach.

What are some of the [key signs](#) of racial discrimination, beyond segregation, beyond skin color as the first identifier? For the victims, there is a lack of voice, power and influence - a sense of invisibility. Among the oppressors, there is often an attitude of indifference, lack of impartiality, stereotyping, need to preserve the status quo, acceptance of low-level racism – that it's “understandable”, lack of self-knowledge, strong

reaction to the word “racist” – as in “that's a strong word”; there is the presumption that others feel the same way, and sometimes a quest to seek out and “use” victims to help make their point and create division.

As we end Nova Scotia's African Heritage Month, the question might be asked *which of these signifiers are applicable to the Halifax region*, home to the largest and most discriminated against indigenous black diaspora in Canada? Its history is marred by segregated communities, often allotted lands near dumps and landfill sites, by forced removals and bulldozing of homes without due compensation, and unequal access to public goods and services. One indicator of the depth of ongoing racism is reflected in a [recent report](#) showing that black citizens in Halifax are six times more likely to be street-checked than white citizens; a second indicator is the swift [response](#) that there was nothing to apologize for (until the Department of Justice eventually forced a more appropriate response). The context in which the story of indigenous Blacks in Halifax is nested is one of control and denigration where excessive use of force towards outgroups is too common, especially indigenous black Nova Scotians – young and old, male and female.

Low-level racism that perhaps characterizes Halifax can be pernicious because it fits so well with the signifiers; it is subtle, disguised, passive, hidden away in non-transparent decisions, does not offer enough reason to take corrective measures, nothing too explicit or blatant. In the [healthcare system](#) for instance, many black Nova Scotians do not feel welcome; they are uninterested in salving words when [concrete steps](#) are available.

There has been discomfort this month that racism might not be low-level – that it might be something more consequential. It disturbs the collective conscious – a signal that it deserves a long hard look, to take an inventory, to ask whether there is an opportunity to confront challenges – that is, before they swiftly disappear from public view as if nothing happened.

## Anomalies Fund Open for Applications

The anomalies fund exists to adjust the salaries of DFA Members "whose salaries are judged to be anomalously low, when compared with the salaries of other Members accounting for experience and rank within their Faculty" (Collective Agreement Article 31A.06).

[Applications to the Anomalies Fund](#) must be submitted by **March 15, 2020** to the chair of the Anomalies Fund Committee: Dr. Mark Stradiotto, Department of Chemistry, Faculty of Science. Applications can be submitted in hard copy or preferably by email ([mark.stradiotto@dal.ca](mailto:mark.stradiotto@dal.ca)). An e-mail submission sent from the Member's dal.ca address is deemed signed by the applicant. Please send a copy of your submission to the head of your unit (Dean, University Librarian, or Vice-President). **For more information and to confirm receipt of application, Members are asked to email [mark.stradiotto@dal.ca](mailto:mark.stradiotto@dal.ca).**

## DFA Public Speaker Series: Backyard Chickens

Join us in Truro on Tuesday, March 24 to hear DFA Member Dr. Stephanie Collins, Assistant Professor, Department of Animal Science and Aquaculture, talk about backyard chicken husbandry. The event begins at 6:30 pm and will be held at the Colchester-East Hants Public Library, co-sponsor of the Public Speaker Series.

## DFA Annual General Meeting

Wednesday, April 29, 2020

11:30 am – 1:00 pm

Pension update & election of DFA's 2020/2021 Executive.

Lunch provided. Stay tuned for details.



## DFA In Solidarity

Congratulations to our colleagues at **Mount Allison** for ratifying a new collective agreement after a six-day strike: <https://www.mafa.ca/2020/02/08/strike-ends-at-mount-allison-university/>.

Solidarity to our colleagues at **74 universities in the UK** who are on the picket lines February 20 – March 13 for pay, pensions, and working conditions:

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/feb/20/thousands-of-university-workers-strike-across-uk>.

For details on the universities involved, see <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/10643/UKs-biggest-ever-university-strikes-as-staff-begin-14-days-of-walkouts-on-Thursday>

### **News You Can Use 2020**

While the DFA is preparing for collective bargaining and then at the table negotiating our new Collective Agreement, the DFA will be issuing regular bargaining updates. During that time, *News You Can Use* will be distributed every other month, beginning February 2020.

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## DFA Office Hours

Monday to Friday from 7:30 am – 3:30 pm

 [dfa.ns.ca](http://dfa.ns.ca)  [@dalfacultyassoc](https://twitter.com/dalfacultyassoc)  [dalfacultyassoc](https://www.facebook.com/dalfacultyassoc)

Feedback or news we can use? Contact DFA Communications Officer [Catherine.Wall@dal.ca](mailto:Catherine.Wall@dal.ca)

### Dalhousie Faculty Association

[dfa@dal.ca](mailto:dfa@dal.ca) 902.494.3722

1443 Seymour Street

PO Box 15000

Halifax NS B3H 4R2