

MEMBERSHIP ISSUES

Membership Development

There are many ways in which the Federation keeps in touch with members on local campuses across the country. Notwithstanding national media coverage and other wide-reaching national activities, the work of the member local is crucial to the proper development of awareness among students at all Federation member locals.

Generally, the national office prepares materials and resources for use by the member local, relying on the member local to communicate directly with members.

MEMBERSHIP ADVISORIES

Federation membership advisories contain updates and other key internal information. In order to keep members apprised of internal Federation activities, since May 1999, three membership advisories have been distributed to member locals by fax and email, in addition to numerous Access 2000 campaign updates.

IMPLEMENTATION OF MEMBERSHIP AWARENESS STRATEGY

The Federation is best described as 'a partnership of students' unions.' Each member local of this partnership pools resources to undertake work at the provincial and national levels. Just as it is the responsibility of each member local to promote the work that is undertaken at the local or campus level, so too is it the responsibility of the member local to promote the work that it undertakes at the provincial and national levels.

Over the years, member locals have developed means to entrench the profile of the work that it undertakes at the provincial and national levels. The Membership Awareness Strategy, first passed at the May 1997 national general meeting, seeks to formalise practises that member locals can undertake to increase the profile of the work they do at the provincial and national level. The Strategy is divided into a preamble and two main components: Raising Awareness Among Elected Officials and Raising Awareness Among Membership on Campus, each with a checklist of reminders for member locals' convenience.

Since May 1997, the strategy has been updated from year-to-year and included in the Organising Manual produced each fall and distributed to member locals and provincial components.

Votes to Re-affirm Membership

KWANTLEN UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

Kwantlen University-College is an institution with roughly 11,000 full and part-time students serving the sub-urban communities to south and southeast of Vancouver. The Kwantlen Students' Association was a founding member of the Federation in 1981. During the decade which followed, the Association participated actively in the Federation.

However, in 1991, the Association's active participation in the Federation began to wane. That summer, the Federation received notice from the Association that it intended to hold a referendum on Federation membership in September of that year.

The Federation informed the Association that it had failed to provide the other members of the Federation with the six month's notice that the Bylaws required and that, therefore, the notice was invalid. Early in September 1991, the Federation's provincial Chairperson attended an Association Executive meeting to explain in more detail the Federation's position. He left that meeting with the understanding that the referendum would be re-scheduled.

In late September, the Federation learned that the Association had proceeded with a referendum vote, and that the Association's members had voted, by a narrow margin, to de-federate. The Federation immediately took the position that it would not recognise the results as being valid and communicated that position to the Association.

At the time of the vote, the Association was more than a year behind on fee remittances. Despite repeated requests, the Association failed to remit those fees or any fees for the year in which the disputed referendum was held.

In summer 1997, the Federation was informed by its lawyers that it would lose any claim over the oldest of the fees owed from the Association if it did not initiate legal action by August 31 of that year. Though it was reluctant to do so, the National Executive felt that it had no option but to

seek a legal judgement in order to collect the fees.

The lawyers also advised, and the National Executive agreed, that a judgement should be sought as part of the legal action on the question of membership and on the matter of all fees collected but not remitted by the Association for the period following the disputed referendum.

In summer 1998, the Federation was contacted by the new president of the Association about whether a settlement could be reached before the matter proceeded to court. An initial meeting was held in which both parties informally stated their understanding of the situation. To the surprise of Federation representatives, the Association agreed with the claim concerning the amount of fees owed prior to and for the year of the disputed referendum. There was, however, no agreement on the issue of subsequent year's fees and on the basic issue of membership.

In the fall, an examination for discovery was held in which the Federation's lawyers sought evidence from the Association. To the surprise of the Federation, the Association expressed no interest in examining any representative of the Federation.

The matter remained relatively dormant until late January, roughly six weeks before the scheduled court date, when the Federation was approached once again by the Association's president seeking to negotiate a settlement.

Negotiations commenced within a few days and after a few hours a settlement was reached. Under the financial terms of the settlement, the Federation received all provincial and national membership fees – approximately \$78,000.00 – owed prior to and for the year in which the disputed referendum occurred. The Federation also received \$30,000.00 for interest on the withheld fees and for legal costs. The Federation relinquished any claim for membership fees for the years after the 1991-92 fiscal year.

On the question of membership, the Association agreed that the referendum had been invalid and that it was still a member of the Federation. It was agreed that a new referendum would be held in fall 1999 and that it would be conducted in accordance with the current Bylaws of the

Federation. It was also agreed that the elected leadership of the Association would take a neutral stance during the vote. The Association also agreed to actively participate in the Federation during the period leading up to the membership vote in September. In May, the Association was represented at a national general meeting for the first time in eight years and was represented at the provincial general meeting later in the summer. In September, the Association distributed the Studentsaver Card and commenced issuing International Student Identity Cards.

In mid-October, the referendum campaign commenced on the College's four campuses. The response to the Federation's campaigns from Kwantlen students was immensely positive. Most knew about and supported the tuition fee freeze. In addition, the services offered by the Federation were also a significant factor in the successful membership drive. Voting took place October 26-28, with 97.4% of students voting in favour of renewed membership. The final results were:

1641 in favour,
45 votes opposed and
3 spoiled ballots.

Full Membership Votes

GRENFELL COLLEGE STUDENTS' UNION

Sir Wilfred Grenfell College is a campus of Memorial University of Newfoundland serving the west coast of Newfoundland. The Grenfell College Students' Union was a founding member of the Federation in 1981 and remained an active member of the Federation for the next 17 years. In March 1998, the students' union conducted a referendum on continued membership. During the campaign preceding the vote, false and misleading information was circulated about the Federation resulting in a majority voting against continued membership.

During the year that followed, the Union expressed a renewed interest in the Federation and the May 1999 national general meeting resolved to invite a representative of the Students' Union to the November national general meeting. However, the invitation was unnecessary as the Students' Union

submitted an application letter for prospective membership in the Federation in early September.

In early September the council of the union voted overwhelmingly in favour of organising a Federation membership referendum. In mid-September, Federation organisers and Students' Union volunteers collected the required 10% of students' signatures in less than a week. The campaign began almost immediately after the petition drive.

During the campaign students at Grenfell College were interested in the work of the Federation and expressed support for the idea of working with students across the country. Voting took place between September 28 and 30, with 96% of students voting in favour of rejoining the Federation. The final results were:

477 votes in favour;
19 votes opposed; and
one spoiled ballot.

The National Executive has reviewed the full membership application letter, as per Bylaw I, and is recommending that the unions' members be accepted as full members at this national general meeting.

Applications for Prospective Membership

QUEEN'S SOCIETY OF GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS

The Queen's University Society of Graduate and Professional Students is composed of the roughly 2,000 graduate students enrolled at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario.

The Society's predecessor organisation, an unincorporated students' union known as the Queen's University Graduate Students' Society, was a founding member of the Federation and, for the decade which followed, actively participated in the Federation. In 1991 the Society incorporated, becoming the Queen's University Society of Graduate and Professional Students. Shortly after, the Society's executive declared that it was not the same organisation; therefore it was not obligated to

Membership Issues

collect the Federation's membership fees. The Federation was confident that the new Society's position was invalid but did not aggressively pursue the issue.

For most of the eight years since the Society's restructuring, there has been minimal contact between the Federation and the Society. However, this past spring that began to change. On May 2, National Chairperson-elect Michael Conlon made a presentation on the Federation to the Society's council. Later that month, three representatives of the Society attended portions of the national general meeting and in June one representative attended the Ontario provincial general meeting.

On September 15 National Chairperson Conlon made a second presentation to the Society's council. At the same meeting, the council voted overwhelmingly to apply for prospective membership in the Federation.

The National Executive has reviewed the Society's prospective membership application letter and is recommending that the Society be accepted as a prospective member at this national general meeting.

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA GRADUATE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

The University of Manitoba Graduate Students' Association is composed of roughly 2,500 graduate students enrolled at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg.

On September 29 National Chairperson Michael Conlon made a presentation on the benefits of Federation membership to the Association's council. At that same meeting the council voted overwhelmingly to apply for prospective membership in the Federation.

The National Executive has reviewed the Association's prospective membership application letter and is recommending that the Association be accepted as a prospective member at this national general meeting.

Incongruity of Membership

In 1992, the Ontario Federation of Students resolved to transform itself into the Ontario Component of the Canadian Federation of Students. At the time there were some members of the Ontario Federation of Students that were not members of the Canadian Federation of Students. As a condition of becoming a provincial component and receiving an allocation from the national budget, the provincial organisation agreed to require its members, that did not belong to the national Federation, to either join nationally or withdraw provincially.

In spite of the agreement, only some of the Ontario locals that did not belong to the national Federation have since joined. The following student associations continue to participate provincially and pay provincial dues without participating nationally and paying national dues:

- Atkinson College Student Association
- McMaster University Graduate Students' Association

The May 1999 national general meeting resolved that a plan be developed and implemented in the upcoming year to achieve full congruency within the upcoming year. The July 1999 National Executive meeting struck a subcommittee to develop the plan. It is expected to submit its findings and recommendations to the next National Executive meeting, scheduled for early January.