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## COLLEGIALITY AND MANAGEMENT

Organizing ... or being organized?



FQP  
PU

FÉDÉRATION  
QUÉBÉCOISE DES  
PROFESSEURES  
ET PROFESSEURS  
D'UNIVERSITÉ



WORKING  
CONDITIONS FOR  
PROFESSORS  
IN QUEBEC  
UNIVERSITIES



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# CONTENTS



**08**

THE IDEAL OF COLLEGIALLY

---



**10**

WHAT'S LEFT OF COLLEGIALLY

---



**19**

ABANDONING ADMINISTRATIVE  
POSITIONS

---



**23**

GOVERNANCE DISCONNECTED  
FROM COLLEGIALLY

---



**31**

ORGANIZING OR BEING  
ORGANIZED?

# COLLEGIALITY AND MANAGEMENT

**Organizing ... or being organized?**

This publication is an initiative of the Fédération québécoise des professeures et professeurs d'université (FQPPU). It is the second in a series of four brief reports resulting from an action research project undertaken by the FQPPU's Committee on Working Conditions for Professors. This research was made possible by the ongoing support of the FQPPU and its staff, and in collaboration with the executive committees of the unions and associations of professors. We appreciate their help and want to thank all of the professors who participated in the focus groups and shared their experiences and thoughts; their accounts greatly contributed to the analysis. This research was funded by the FQPPU.

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**[www.fqppu.org](http://www.fqppu.org)**.

- 1. The Juggling Act | Thriving or surviving?**
- 2. Collegiality and Management | Organizing or being organized?**
- 3. Research and Creation | Conducting quality research or overproducing?**
- 4. Teaching and Education | Communicating or bargaining?**



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# Introduction

Universities have undergone drastic changes over the past few decades, as has the work of professors. University professors in Quebec are still deeply committed to teaching, research, and service. Many, however, worry about the trend to commercialize knowledge and the resulting changes to working conditions for professors, which insidiously reduce autonomy, lead to work overload, and warp the rules of collegiality through the introduction of competition.

In order to better understand what can improve or compromise health and commitment to a university career, and to supplement the quantitative data already available on the issue, the FQPPU funded an action research project that included professors from ten Quebec universities. Professors from different professions and disciplines, at various career stages, participated in the study.<sup>1</sup>

The focus groups illuminated certain aspects of professorial work that are deeply ingrained in universities, but also uncovered hidden, more difficult aspects of such work. The stories and the exchanges in the focus groups, as well as the analysis, lead to a broader understanding of professors' working conditions, including how they developed and what pitfalls exist. The interview excerpts are freely included, while respecting anonymity. They were chosen for their authenticity, because they go beyond the anecdotal and reflect widely shared perceptions and experiences. The personal accounts are excerpts from interviews conducted from 2010 to 2013, which were obtained in 18 focus groups of five to fifteen participants. In total, 145 professors from ten universities (École Polytechnique, Concordia University, Université de Montréal, Université de Sherbrooke, UQAM, UQO, UQAR, UQTR, Université Laval, and McGill University) took part in the interviews.

The dissemination of these research results in brief reports constitutes an invitation to other professors who may want to be heard. These documents are intended to mobilize academics to protect what is important and to contribute to solutions.

With this in mind, the FQPPU and its Committee on Working Conditions for Professors would like to join forces with union executives to support professors who are prepared to lead initiatives in their workplace and make real commitments to changing some aspects of their work.

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1 Details about the methodology of this action research project can be found in the annex of the first brief report (*The Juggling Act: Thriving or Surviving?*, FQPPU, 2015, p. 37-38).

# COLLEGIALITY AND MANAGEMENT

This is the second in a series of brief reports dealing with different aspects of the daily work of professors. While the other reports address the juggling act involved in professorial work as a whole, research, and teaching, this report focuses on collegiality and management in universities. How do professors engage in and experience collegiality? How do they view academic administrative positions? How does university governance affect collegiality? This report will attempt to shed light on these and other issues.

## THE IDEAL OF COLLEGIALITY

Collegiality is characteristic of being organized by a “college,” a group of individuals who hold equal status and have the knowledge required to participate in the decision-making process. The ideal of collegiality has two dimensions: on one hand, the task of knowledge transmission among peers with shared expertise, and on the other, the managing of this work among colleagues who debate and devise organizational structures. In the modern academic community, collegiality is based on peer recognition and is aimed at protecting the autonomy of the university from the influence of external interest groups, such as industry, government, and religion. Collegiality is associated with concepts such as collaboration, shared responsibility, pooled resources, participation,

and democracy. It is at the centre of university life and should, in principle, be practised daily in the actions of various university management bodies, such as departmental assemblies, program committees, boards, faculty councils, boards of directors, and university senates.

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*By making a genuine effort to contribute to our workplace, we can change things.*

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Collegiality is completely different from the way an organization is managed conventionally, where management makes decisions and employees carry them out.

Academia, with its unique form of governance, allows for co-management with various internal stakeholders. The possibility of



getting involved with university governing bodies, of course, leads to collaboration between professors, but also guarantees discussion about shared issues and, ideally, collective, or even consensus-based, decisions.

***The collegiality between us, between profs in the same department, is added to the collegiality with other university stakeholders. It's the collegiality used to make decisions within various bodies.***

***Even if we don't agree on everything, certain principles are respected. I greatly appreciate the work that I can carry out with students, as well as with employees of other unions within the university.***

The ideal of collegiality consists in practices that are adapted to the academic community, yet, for some, it remains a far cry from reality.



## WHAT'S LEFT OF COLLEGIALLY

### Colleagues Who Are Almost Completely Ignored

During the interviews, some professors reported that they value their departmental life and that they had developed good relationships with some colleagues. In contrast, others made the unfortunate observation that their departments were dehumanized workplaces, where isolation was common and where social relationships were rare or even non-existent. Work overload goes hand in hand with maintaining distance, since professors try to maximize their working time.

*I see my colleagues at the Centre that I'm a member of. Profs who are very committed, but who have very few relationships with each other. After they have given their course, after they've gone out to meet partners, after they've interacted properly with their graduate students, after they've corrected things... When we've done all that needs to be done, there is no more time, no free time.*

Having few social relationships often has the effect of creating an environment of isolation, a lack of mutual assistance even within departments. The result is a grim workplace where people do not know each other very well and where places

for socializing are becoming rare, difficult to create, or completely non-existent.

*There is a form of individualism that is exacerbated in academia, and I don't think that it is characteristic of our university, but it kills me. There is no collaboration, no solidarity. I find it very, very hard. I don't even know what my colleagues are working on. I find it ridiculous. For me, it was a big shock. And I never got over it. Even after ten years, I can't accept it. I find it very, very difficult.*

The fact that work relationships do not exist can lead to misunderstandings. Opportunities for meeting become rarer, and it is sometimes only crisis (student conflicts, strikes, or lockouts) that create opportunities for getting to know colleagues and for experiencing real solidarity.

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*My first experience with unions was when professors went on strike. I felt an instant, spontaneous, strong sense of solidarity. There was incredible mobilization, which was new for me. I ended up meeting a lot more professors. I met other colleagues because through picketing, not only do we talk, but we talk about work.*

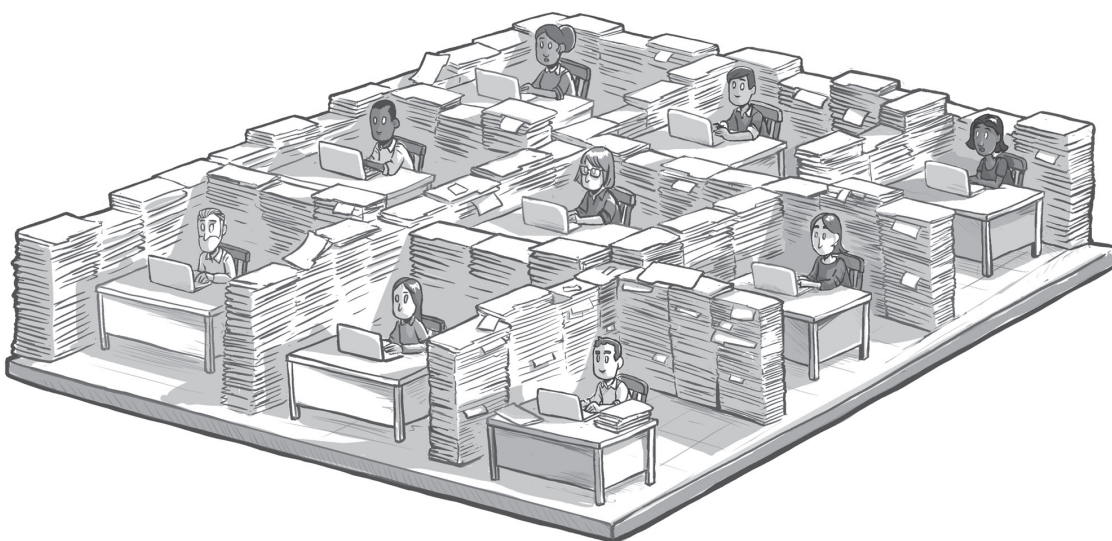
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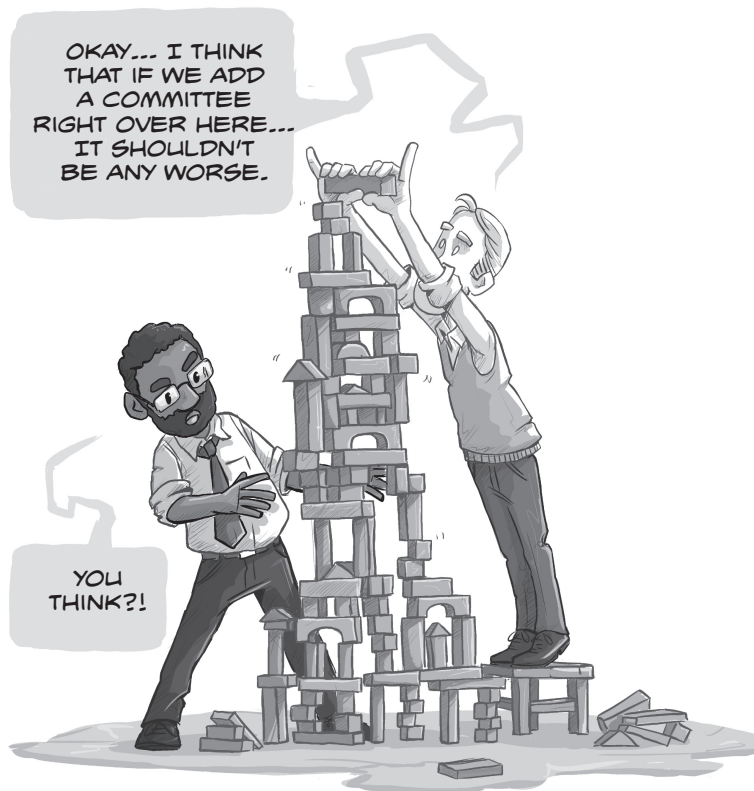
## Collegiality Being Undermined

Academic freedom, a value intrinsic to academia, is a responsibility and a condition of professorial work, which results in freedom when it comes to thinking, speaking, teaching, and maintaining a critical gaze and critical distance. Academic freedom is guided by collegiality, which is supposed to be at the heart of how work is organized. However, a number of professors are surprised to note that collegiality is difficult to define. While collective agreements and various regulations and policies remain vague, some professors have their own view about what collegiality is or what it should be.

*I think that collegiality within departmental assemblies is how, collectively, we balance individual needs or freedom of choice with regards to career and department or program needs.*

Other professors note that collegiality is often presented as a principle with no concrete application. A number of professors were disappointed by the lack of solidarity and noted that they were victims of backroom games that bordered on disrespect. Such behaviour can certainly be disheartening for those affected by it and can occur during course assignment and during evaluations.





*I taught a course for three years and the program director decided to change the course description. He asked another prof to do it. The other professor went to the faculty meeting and announced, in my absence: "We are changing your course description!" Why didn't they consult with me? I feel that this was a lack of respect, a lack of recognition.*

Collegiality is a management approach with inner workings that are sometimes unclear to professors. As such, it would be beneficial to teach professors about collegiality, so that they can grasp its inherent principles and functions, because when there is a lack of collegial culture, other more hierarchical management approaches may take its place.

*There is a lot of educating to do on the way in which our organized bodies function or should function. What does it mean to make decisions collectively? And this goes not only for assemblies, but for administrative positions. It's important to note that the people holding these positions are not spokespeople for the university administration, but instead are spokespeople for the assembly. If we want to conserve and strengthen a culture of collegiality, we have to take this path. It means that we need leadership within each assembly so that these practices can become standard. We can't expect a young professor to exhibit this leadership right from the start. If there is no strong collegial culture in core units like departments, a vertical, hierarchical structure will be implemented and reinforced.*

To reduce the work of the department's administrators, for example, professors are sometimes tempted to relegate some responsibilities to other organized bodies or to university administrators. This reduction poses a genuine threat to collegiality.

Even though collegiality gives rise to practical difficulties, some professors stress the importance of preserving it as a co-management approach. They note that by refusing to deliver on the rights and obligations that make up this fundamental principle of academia, there is a risk of slipping and losing control, particularly with regards to peer evaluation. Despite the challenges this form of evaluation represents, professors agree that it is necessary.

***We need to accept collective responsibility if we don't want to leave it to someone else, if we don't want one individual or the administration to evaluate us. It's a choice we made collectively, and it's one that we shouldn't abandon.***

While professors stress the importance of preserving collegiality as a practice, they are also aware that it can sometimes be insidious.

***I'm a big supporter of as much self-management as possible. But that requires safeguards. Research in the manufacturing sector and other sectors has shown that self-managed teams can become more torturous than more conventional teams with a supervisor. Perhaps we haven't thought enough about that.***

Collegiality only works when people know its principles and understand the co-management structure. At the beginning of their careers, some professors are not familiar with how their department operates, with the two-tiered university structure, or with the types of roles assigned to various committees or management positions. A lack of awareness about the existence and mandates of organized bodies and committees within the university may also be linked to a silo mentality, where individuals ignore other work being carried out at the same institution. A lack of knowledge about the overall functioning of the university was emphasized during the interviews.

## **Survival of the Fittest**

Personal accounts reveal that some professors fear the impact of expressing themselves in departmental or university meetings. They sometimes feel discomfort when faced with sharing their ideas because they fear their colleagues' disapproval. This fear is even more pronounced before professors have received tenure or job permanency. Some professors are able to come out ahead of their colleagues who pander to the unwritten rules that were surreptitiously laid down over the years by professors who dominated their colleagues. Deals are sometimes agreed upon in order to orient and rule in advance on decisions to be made. Rules are put aside in order to serve the needs of a few people.



***I was manipulated by department heads who told me what to write. The goal was to please three people in power. You hear about psychological terror... That's a new term I learned. Today, I really know what it means, even at the practical level.***

A number of professors noted that some individuals exhibit questionable behaviour and would not hesitate to undermine their colleagues or bend the rules in order to get what they want. Some operate in this way by successfully ducking their responsibilities or by joining committees or obtaining positions that provide them with opportunities to exercise power. Unfair behaviour regarding important decisions about performance of professorial duties and department or program development can occur and bring about a climate of mistrust that does not allow collegiality to flourish.

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***The supposedly democratic structures that exist are not actually democratic. In fact, they are easily corruptible, whether it's departmental assemblies, the selection process, or the department head appointment procedure.***

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The issue of evaluation for contract renewal and for tenure also seems to be at the heart of these concerns. These crucial steps, while an integral

part of the academic career, are too often detached from their original goal of improving competency through constructive criticism. Sometimes the fates of individual professors are only determined by their colleagues' good will or good faith.

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***We are over-evaluated within this system. We are evaluated by our students for each course we give. We are evaluated for research grants. We are evaluated for promotions. An evaluation every five years? That doesn't happen at every university.***

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Criticism about the way in which colleagues are evaluated was also strongly worded. Instead of playing a game that devalues, demotivates, and discredits individuals, professors hoped to receive positive recommendations so that they would have more motivation to get engaged in their work.

***I don't understand how colleagues can go after other colleagues, saying they aren't doing enough. We all do too much (...) How far can we be pushed before the dam breaks? There are people who will just beat a dead horse and others who will instead adopt a more fulfilling approach. (...) But I would say that, ultimately, there is an academic culture, that of academic excellence, and in the context of collegiality, it creates an environment with***



*pressure from peers. At some point, it becomes unbearable because we're biting off more than we can chew. But it seems that this pressure is anchored in the culture (...) and it manifests itself during evaluations.*

In addition, some more problematic situations, such as settling scores, take place under the guise of collegiality. A few individuals occasionally oppose their colleagues and attempt to influence decisions made in departmental assemblies, with the goal of undermining others.

*There is a divide in the department that puts psychological and verbal pressure on colleagues. In any case, the weight of collegiality on an individual's trajectory is a heavy one. I will be evaluated and they're waiting for me. They announced it. So there is this threat hanging over me even though I have a good file, which I had checked. They announced publicly that there's a mob waiting for me. The department is split in two. We tell ourselves that if they start announcing things like this for a person, it means that these practices are being implemented for other colleagues. We didn't have to deal with this before.*

To overcome these hurdles, some professors propose that unions should have stronger roles with regards to evaluation or that defence mechanisms against possible abuse of collegiality be implemented. Specifically, this could be achieved with clauses in the collective agreement that allow the

union to challenge decisions that may have been made in bad faith.

*You can't forget that first we need to strengthen people's ability to defend themselves and to have information that enables them to argue within the confines of our famous collegiality. Within departments, would this not be the role of union representatives?*

## **Recognition or Competition?**

To succeed in a highly competitive environment, professors feel the need to be strongly committed to their work, at the risk of it infringing on their personal lives. While they are passionate about their work, they expect some recognition for their investment, but are disappointed when they discover that recognition is rare.

*We have a collegial system. We manage parts of it ourselves and so we are partially responsible. But we are also managed by the administration, and the administration forgets that in the carrot and stick approach, you start with the carrot... As much as they can write letters filled with insults or letters with professional opinions on all sorts of things, they forget about providing us with minimal recognition and support when we do something good.*

The lack of recognition drives some professors to seek external validation. They find themselves in a dual employment situation—their expertise





and competencies thus serve their personal interests instead of those of their university.

*What did I do? I built a career outside of the university, outside of my department. I get a lot of recognition, but unfortunately, it is from outside of my department because it is impossible to contribute and get recognized for it. So, I do that elsewhere.*

The lack of consideration of professors' contributions is accompanied by a discourse of excellence that promotes a one-size-fits-all model where everyone is expected to be similar. The trend towards standardization is thus highly criticized.

*Some people are built for teaching, and others for research or for administration. Together, we're a team. We should build on this instead of asking everyone to do*

*everything at the same time, within the same year.*

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*We are different individuals. We don't have the same ambitions. We don't have the same experience. We don't have the same education. We don't have the same research context, etc. So, I am completely baffled by the idea of standardization. Everyone coloured the same shade of grey, no matter who they are...*

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A number of professors believe that they are developing within a highly competitive environment where personal achievements are valued more than collective success.

The excellence approach thus encourages individualistic behaviour that is detrimental to faculty cohesion. Some professors do collaborate, but with the purpose of furthering their career and enriching their curriculum vitae. Everyone tries to have the upper hand. To do so, professors seem to now follow an individualistic logic that leads to professional accomplishments.

In addition, some university departments create a hierarchical system that generates rivalry among colleagues. This has the adverse effect of driving professors to compare themselves to others, instead of contributing to healthy competition.

*This might be an extreme view, but our system of merit pay is basically a system of divide and conquer. It gets us all hyper-concerned about our own individual status relative to the other people in our departments, rather than being a true incentive to do more inspired work.*

The erosion of collegiality that results from various behaviours and situations leads to some cynicism and disillusionment by ensuring that professors become detached, and while they continue to attend meetings, they do so without real involvement.

## **Increased Presence**

Professors' participation seems targeted and for their own benefit, or at least that is what a number of professors noted when they described

how their colleagues were uninclined to commit to real involvement unless they felt they were being addressed directly.

However, a number of professors put their heart and soul into their involvement and speak out against the attitude of colleagues who have not fully embraced collegiality. They unfortunately note that no matter which actions are initiated, calls for mobilization will always go unanswered by some of their colleagues.

*Being concerned, engaged, conscious of the importance of the academic mission, either you are or you aren't. A prime example is profs who are sick as dogs yet still come in to teach their courses because they feel a terrible sense of guilt. For me, they aren't the problem. They are conscious of collegiality, of the importance of each person in order for it to function, of the importance of their involvement within various organized bodies so that we can keep the power we have, the power that we are in the process of gradually losing.*

Isolation and a lack of colleague collegial relationships reduce opportunities for constructive dialogue about issues that directly concern professors or that relate to the orientation of the programs within which they work. Since they do not know each other well, professors have difficulty discussing issues freely and without fear of judgment when it comes time to debate within committees or at departmental meetings. This lack of solidarity limits the potential to stand together to influence university orientations, which further

restricts the practice of collegiality. The lack of interest about the topics covered in departmental meetings also occurs when professors' yearly duties are assigned. Some professors find their colleagues' apathy and disinterest about the annual workloads of others to be unfortunate.

***Workloads? I don't know if colleagues look at them before the meeting, but I feel like it's a real lack of respect, that people don't care! I ask myself what the point of presenting my workload is when no one is listening to me. I find it very insulting and I know it's not personal because they do it with others as well.***

The nature of these meetings also plays a role in professors' lack of investment. Instead of being an opportunity for real discussion and debate, meetings are often used simply to provide professors with information. A number of professors feel that they are informed of orientations and decisions, but have no real ability to influence the course of events, which results in their disengagement, skepticism, or even cynicism.

The decision to speak for or against various proposals in meetings can also be affected by how meetings are run. For example, when the department head is also the chair of the assembly, role confusion can negatively affect the proceedings, collaborative decision making, and, potentially, collegiality itself.

***When I joined the department, I told myself that the department head should not be presiding over the assemblies.***

***That definitely must be avoided. People who prepared projects also brought them up and had us vote on them quickly by telling us: "We know this really well and we have to move on." And they asked us to do this for tomorrow. I am now the chair. I work with the department head. I ask him about his views on the assembly, about which issues need to be addressed, and in what areas we need to pass resolutions. I always ensure that everyone has an opportunity to speak, and that we eventually make decisions as collectively as possible. Already, this relieves a lot of the tension.***

## ABANDONING ADMINISTRATIVE POSITIONS

### A Loss of Responsibilities

While collegiality is an element of interpersonal relationships, it is also found within decision-making bodies that should be of interest to professors. Finding candidates during the process of electing or designating representatives to sit on committees or to hold various administrative positions has become increasingly difficult. Professors note that it is not easy to find volunteers to take on these duties, and a number feel that they are too overloaded to accept such positions. As a result, it is often the same individuals

who are sitting on various committees and who accept the responsibilities that their colleagues do not want to share. The number of administrative positions to be filled is often high, and it becomes necessary to implement a system of rotation, where each professor, in turn, has the moral obligation to take on the responsibilities of the position. Participation is thus forced and not the result of a desire to get involved collectively: individual needs come before those of the group.

*That being said, it's not easy, because there are people who are staunch individualists and who benefit from collegiality by letting the same people carry out departmental or program administrative tasks. In small departments, this leads to issues because it is always the same people who find themselves in the same positions. In big departments, it's as though collegiality was abandoned in order to leave department administration up to the executive committee.*

The lack of volunteers is not only a result of individualism. Professors are also reluctant to hold administrative positions because carrying out these duties often brings about little recognition, yet they are very demanding. They can also compromise professors' chances to obtain research grants, as well as affect their career advancement, particularly with regards to promotion. There is thus a trade-off between the collective needs and their own.

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*You can write to a funding agency saying "I produced less this year because I had cancer or I was pregnant." But you can't say you produced less because you were in charge of a complicated program that had to be completely overhauled. That? No, no.*

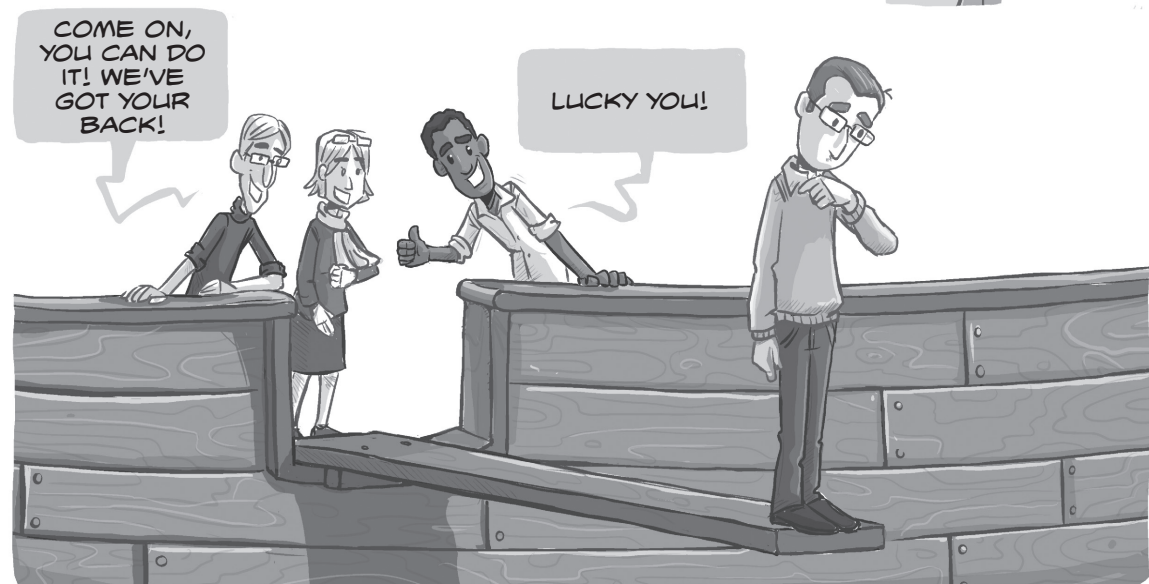
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*Something that annoys me, and that affects recently hired professors, is that every time we agree to take on an administrative task because no one else wants it and because we would love to do it, it's not recognized. During my first evaluation, I was criticized for not doing enough research, even basic research. All this to say, I think collegiality should also take into consideration the fact that 33%, 33%, 33% is not reality. We are not all 33%, 33%, 33% in our tasks and we shouldn't have to be.*

## A Lack of Volunteers

Taking on an administrative position sometimes has an effect on personality, behaviour, and the way individuals make decisions. Some professors forget about the principles of collegiality and instead aim at efficiency or act in an authoritarian manner, which leaves little room for consulting others or for collective decision making.

*The people who hold administrative positions do so in different ways, depending on their personality. I think that in some cases there is a type of transformation that occurs from the moment they put on*





*the administration “hat.” A department assembly happens, the administration wants a decision to be made, and there is no discussion. It’s as if we don’t have the means. It can’t wait: it needs to happen right now. So in the end, bad decisions are made and everyone ends up frustrated.*

Due to the lack of volunteers, some professors end up taking on more than one position to avoid vacancies and outside supervision. In the best-case scenario, professors hold these positions because they want to really contribute to the community and develop programs. They have obtained these positions because of their colleagues’ confidence in them. In the worst-case scenario, people hold administrative positions in order to steer decision making in favour of their own agenda and interests. Regardless of the situation, there is always the risk that collegiality will suffer when individuals hold administrative positions for too long, whether it is intentional or not.

*I think that there needs to be a system of rotation and that the same people shouldn’t stay in the same administrative positions. When you’ve held a position for a few years, you see the big picture. If you have made decisions for years without making too many mistakes, you feel like you don’t really need to consult anyone anymore. You risk cutting corners by telling yourself: “I’ve made many decisions and I know where we need to go.” Even if you have good intentions, you can end up thinking that your decision, your way of seeing things, your position is the best and that you don’t have to consult anyone else anymore. I find this to be very perverse.*

## **More Responsibility, Less Power**

After accepting administrative positions, professors see their duties and tasks multiply. A feeling of disillusionment grows quickly when they discover the amount of work attached to the position. This disenchantment can turn to frustration when they grasp that they cannot carry out the work that actually led them to take on the position, because of time constraints, bureaucracy, and a lack of power.

*After a year in a program director position that wasn’t too complicated, I felt that there was not enough support. You’re alone, everyone else is too busy. Our power is an illusion. What was most difficult for me was that ultimately I was unable to do the things that I wanted to do, such as development, meeting with students, the human side of things... I filled orders and was constantly, constantly, constantly dealing with bureaucracy. I couldn’t delegate because there was no one to delegate to, or there was one person for five programs. It makes no sense.*

In itself, the lack of power is difficult enough to accept, but some professors felt a real sense of rejection when decisions made by the administration were ignored or even unilaterally reversed by higher governing bodies or by people who held positions that were higher up in the hierarchy, such as deans. This lack of consideration for the duties of an academic administration is humiliating, and professors felt that their opinions were not taken seriously. The lack of recognition for those who hold

such positions has a disheartening effect and directly results in faculty members abandoning administrative positions.

*There are decisions made by committee, such as evaluating a file to decide whether or not to accept a student. But then it goes to the dean who decides not to accept the student. And the dean doesn't even tell us! What is the point of asking us to evaluate files if, afterwards, our decision is reversed?*

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*They don't support our decisions. You're dealing with a student, you're carrying out program organization, and you're following things to the letter—to the letter. Then the student takes out a laundry list of complaints (...) there's manipulation. And then, the deanship doesn't consult me, doesn't even call me, and bam! The decisions are all changed.*

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Several professors noted an increased emphasis on hierarchy within universities, which puts a strain on professors' academic responsibilities. This extra administrative burden deters professional involvement and undermines collegiality.

In addition, the support for administrative positions is often inadequate, which is an additional barrier to professors' involvement within the university. For example, volunteers for these positions take

on certain duties that would normally be carried out by support staff. This makes their workloads considerably heavier and leads to frustration at not accomplishing what they had set out to accomplish when they chose to get involved.

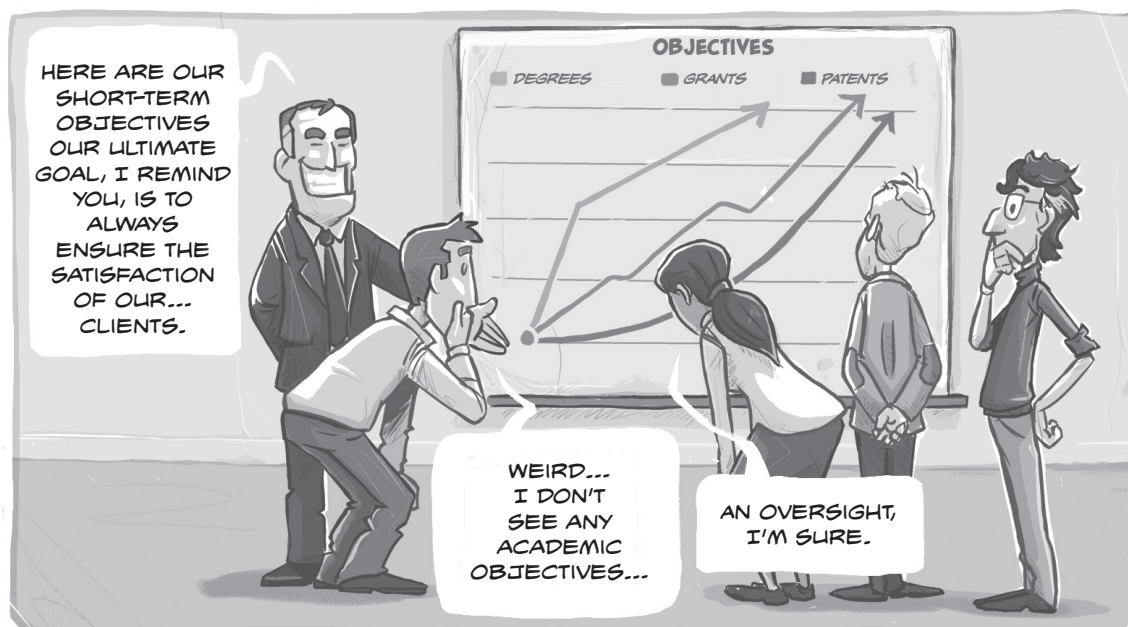
*Human resources has trouble filling positions and retaining support staff. It doesn't help at all with administration. Directors need support staff, otherwise they wind up doing all the clerical work themselves. It falls on them. So they will have to go into the system themselves to access students' files.*

## GOVERNANCE DISCONNECTED FROM COLLEGIALITY

### Management Modelled on the Private Sector

Some professors worry that a culture of productivity modelled on that of the private sector is taking hold within academia. University administrators seem concerned about cost management, the number of grants received, commercialization of research findings, and the performance and increased enrolment of students, who are often referred to as "clients."

The process of adopting market mechanisms into university



administration reflects market ideology or the need to commercialize the university, particularly for customized training programs that are adapted to the needs of businesses. The governance structure and the mechanisms that guide decision making are therefore criticized by professors who see that they infringe upon collegiality.

*There are still some places where collegiality exists, such as within departments and unions. But elsewhere, and for several years in Quebec, the trend is to employ management methods used in the private sector within the public sector. Principles of collegiality are thrown out in favour of hierarchical management, and this is seen, in particular, in the power held by faculties and in deanships. For me, clearly, it is*

*not an irreversible process. Our collective agreement, which is aimed at protecting collegiality, prescribes colleagues' working conditions, but also the conditions for participating in university co-management. So everything is not lost. We still have significant leverage, but it's also true that the newly established managerial practices compromise collegiality. Even if, paradoxically, university administrations continue to refer to it, collegiality is more theoretical than actually practised. Universities are under pressure that is external to academia and adopt management methods borrowed from other work environments.*

In this shift towards a "private-sector" style of management, professors regretfully note that new administrators are unaware of how universities



operate, particularly when they come from other work environments.

*You can't manage a university like you would manage a business or like you would manage a CEGEP. People experience culture shock if they come from the private sector or from the government. What's a university? Even our senior administration is not aware...*

While members of the academic community are in the best position to influence decisions and measure their daily impact, the role of such academics, particularly of professors, within organized bodies is diminishing. They are concerned by the large presence of external socio-economic influences. A lack of knowledge or ignorance about how the university functions as an institution prevents external actors from making informed decisions. They tend to hang on to the senior administration's every word and vote in favour of the positions it defends without much thought. The accounts are therefore quite troubling.

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*In terms of the board of directors, I have never seen a socio-economic representative vote or speak out against the administration. Never. At the very least, more profs and lecturers should be involved with the board.*

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*Training should occur at all levels, even at the level of the board of directors. External socio-economic actors have absolutely no idea about what they are agreeing or disagreeing with, about what is being discussed, and about what they are being asked to vote on. They don't really understand what a university is, let alone what it could or should be.*

Students also have a role within organized bodies, and professors do not dispute that. They are critical, however, of the degree of influence that student members' have over the highest decision-making bodies, since it is often greater than that of faculty members.

*We, the profs, can argue and prepare projects that are tens of pages long... Students, on the other hand... When they come, the administration listens to them. They may not realize the extent of their own power. For example, with regards to curriculum committees, students hold the balance of power.*

It's not such a big leap from that to fully embracing both the logic of "the-customer-is-always-right" and management methods from the private sector.

SO... I SUGGEST THAT WE DIVIDE IT  
AS FOLLOWS: 40% FOR RESEARCH,  
25% FOR UPGRADING  
OUR EQUIPMENT,  
AND 35% FOR CREATING  
A MARKETING AND  
COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE.

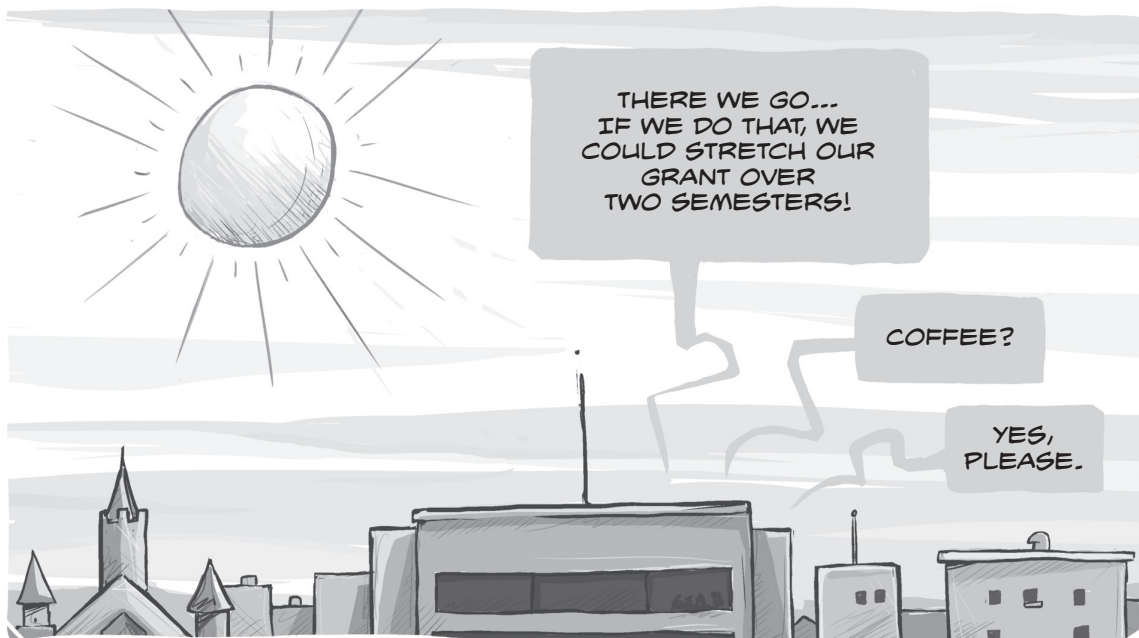
THAT BEING SAID...  
IT'S A TEAM DECISION.  
ANY THOUGHTS?

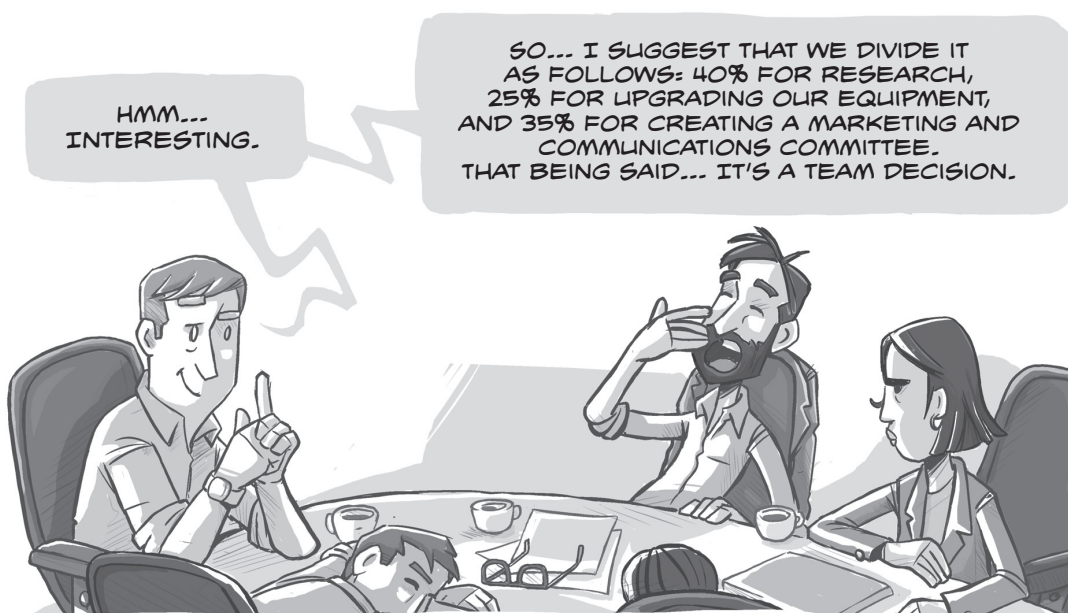


... OKAY... HERE GOES...  
IS A NEW COMMUNICATIONS  
COMMITTEE REALLY NECESSARY?

IT'S TRUE,  
DON'T WE ALREADY  
HAVE ONE?







## Consultation and Decision-Making Forums: An Illusion

The consultation process for nominating senior administrators is perplexing for a number of professors. They dislike that the process is nothing more than smoke and mirrors. They also question the lack of transparency and ethics exhibited by some administrators after being hired.

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*For several years, there has been a quiet trend on the part of senior administrators to turn a deaf ear to the consultation process, by telling themselves: “No matter the result of the consultation, I’m going to do what I want anyway.” And that is a problem.*

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*One thing that bothers me a lot is that there is no code of ethics for senior administrators.*

Furthermore, forums where decisions about program orientation should be made in a collegial manner are often infiltrated by managers or others who are trying to influence the course of events under the guise of better understanding procedures and regulations. However, the guiding principles that they hope to impose do not always reflect the real needs of the programs or the students.

*People in deanships aim to guide program development, but they are not always in the best position to do so, nor the ones with the most knowledge about the field. Under the guise that they better understand the university’s internal codes, which will help advance projects, they tell us “Listen, comply with such and such a thing, and*

***I will ensure that your program change goes through quickly.” It’s not necessarily what’s best for the field or for the people.***

It’s not surprising that organized bodies are sometimes abandoned, or at least criticized, because of how they operate. Professors are often under the impression that their participation consists only in making decisions about matters that are not very important or in supporting decisions that they have not had the chance to discuss. Simply asking questions is sometimes unwelcome, and those who do ask questions are viewed as troublemakers who are holding up the process.

It has become common for projects to be brought to representatives at the last minute, without them seeing the project

coming, without having enough time to prepare by collecting the information necessary to make an informed decision, and without having time to discuss it with their colleagues in order to get their feedback or to mobilize. Professors resent the fact that decisions are made before they have a chance to think about the possible impacts.

***What I find difficult is the tension we experience when we feel unprepared to make important decisions. In two days, we have to make decisions about projects that have never been presented to the executive committee and that could have a major impact on one of our two biggest programs. I’m part of the executive committee and I’ve never heard of these projects. They came out of nowhere: it’s bad news for us, horrible news, that may shut down one of our two biggest programs.***





## ORGANIZING OR BEING ORGANIZED?

### Findings

From the accounts of professors, it is clear that collegiality is an ideal that is too often compromised. Although it is provided for in a number of policies and regulations, collegiality is rarely consistently present within the various organized bodies. It could be due to a lack of comprehension about how the co-management system functions or due to power games that are beneficial to only some and that guide decisions that should be made in assemblies or by committee: this reduces collegial forums to consultation forums. The method of participation in these forums thus becomes mere presence and there is no longer an opportunity for co-management, due to the nature of the meetings and a climate of mistrust.

Incidentally, some colleagues hold a lot of power within their departments, either due to their administrative positions or side deals, which often are negotiated during peer evaluation. Professors also reported that accounts were being settled under the guise of collegiality.

The absence of institutional recognition and the imposition of standards for the profession exacerbate the individualistic and disrespectful behaviour that undermines collegiality. This results in a lack of mobilization on the part of

professors, which leads to difficulties when trying to find volunteers to sit on the university's decision-making bodies or when filling administrative positions. In fact, a number of professors are not only put off by the lack of recognition, but also by the amount of work and the lack of real power that comes with such positions.

On another front, professors who were part of the focus groups were critical of austerity in the workplace, which they sometimes found to be dehumanized, and of the lack of time for socializing and developing relationships. This is in addition to being frustrated about decisions beyond their control.

Finally, the current style of university governance, which takes increasing inspiration from the "private-sector" style of management (New Public Management), is a clear threat to collegiality. It has become common for administrators who are unaware of how a university functions to blindly approve guiding principles proposed by university boards. For their part, faculty members are not under any illusions with regard to consultations of which they are a part, and which are often nothing more than smoke screens.



## **Collective Actions: A Potential Solution?**

Professors' accounts establish the importance of preserving the principle of collegiality, despite occasional lapses. They feel fully carrying out their role within the university, part of which consists in getting involved with organized bodies and decision making, requires collective accountability. However, a prerequisite for collegiality is the sharing of knowledge and experience. When welcoming new professors, it would thus be useful, or even necessary, to explain how the department and various university structures and organized bodies operate.

While not a mentoring system per se, professors' guidance or support could be overseen by the administration or executive of the department. New colleagues would thus be informed of individual and collective responsibilities, rules, and duties for each of the various decision-making forums within the university. While the union can also play a role, on this issue, departments are probably in a better place to do so, since each unit functions differently and has its own history and features (fields, programs, etc.).

With the aim of protecting or, at best, reinforcing collegiality, the importance of preserving democratic organized bodies—faculty unions—was also highlighted in interviews with professors.

*Guy Rocher said: “If democracy still exists in academia, it’s in faculty unions.” So, we must work to reinstate the democratic process and reduce non-transparent decisions. To me, it seems like there’s a lot of work to be done there.*

In effect, unions can oppose university administrations by ensuring that collective agreements are respected and that specific mandates are obtained by their members through a deliberation process and democratic vote.

*The pyramid needs to be inverted. Administrative structures should support professors and lecturers because they know the job and are at the heart of the university mission. Professionals, program directors, department heads, and also deans, vice-rectors, and everyone else that could be considered administrative and professional staff should be trained to better understand what a university is and how it operates. The university is a nearly one-thousand-year-old institution. There are ways to remind people of the principles that have withstood the test of time and that work.*

University unions can be distinguished by the nature of their actions. In addition to their primary role of negotiating and managing working conditions, they also deal with the major issue of protecting professors' participation within various internal decision-making and democratic bodies. This is accomplished by maintaining or reinforcing provisions in collective agreements that allow professors to be elected to decision-



making bodies where the majority of representatives should come from the academic community. Union officials could also occasionally attend board meetings as guests, so as to ensure that collegiality is being exercised.

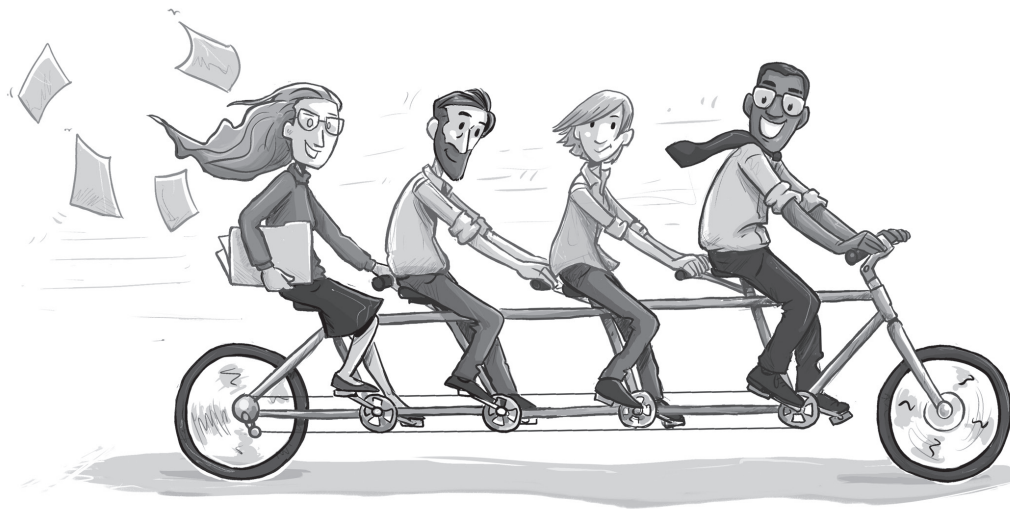
The work of the FQPPU's Committee on University Funding has shown that bureaucracy has become widespread and has intensified in universities over the past few years. The disproportionate increase in the payroll of managerial and administrative staff is proof of this. Yet, the administration's increased influence has completely changed universities. In addition to an imbalance with regards to budgets and staff, an increasingly large distance exists between departments and decision-making bodies.

It would be best to get back to basics and provide better support for the academic and scientific functions of the university, which are its *raison d'être*. Collegiality ensures consistency within the university because it requires that all faculty members remain committed to the university's missions of teaching and research.



# Things can change.

**The FQPPU supports its members' actions that are aimed at protecting and promoting collegiality.**



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Collegiality is a fundamental principle of university management. Based on the results of a study of 145 professors in ten Quebec universities, this publication outlines, through many first-hand accounts, the ways in which collegiality is present in universities on a daily basis. Lapses in collegiality and many other current issues in universities require collective action.

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