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Lobby group for Quebec researchers

Sylvain-Jacques Desjardins | Quebec researchers now have their own lobby group to fight for their rights. The Association des chercheurs professionnels du Québec (ACPQ), the first association of its kind in Canada, was officially born last April.

The group was founded by Claude Côté, a retired university researcher, who saw a crying need to bolster everything from job-security to funding opportunities for scientific investigators. "The ACPQ was created to defend the rights of researchers in the same manner that other professional associations have banded together to lobby for their rights," says Côté, ACPQ president.

ACPQ co-founders include Edward Bradley, an adjunct oncology professor at McGill and a professor of medicine at Université de Montréal, as well as Michel J. Tremblay, a professor of medicine at Université Laval.

Bradley stresses the ACPQ will represent several constituents at different phases of their careers: incoming researchers, postdoctoral researchers, as well as tenure-track academics who research on the side. "Tenure-track academics may already have job security and associations," Bradley says. "But new or postdoctoral researchers are in precarious positions. They do not have job security, nor do they have very strong voices in decision-making forums that affect their future."

The ACPQ aims to change that and empower researchers. "I have people looking after me," says Bradley, who has tenure. "But young or contract researchers (do not have job security) and need an association to defend their rights." Researchers, Côté stresses, face two major issues today: a ferocious battle for adequate funding, which is now played on a global scale, not to mention insufficient grant opportunities for investigators at all levels. "The ACPQ's goal is to provide researchers with a seat at every decision-making table to fight for our funding needs," he says.

Bradley compares the ACPQ to the birth of cycling clubs 25 years ago. "A cyclist pedals the streets alone, much as researchers work by themselves in labs," he says. "But by banding together, cyclists obtained everything from bike path to better visibility, which proves that people who work alone can come together to reach their objectives."

The ACPQ has not yet begun its membership drive, but plans to recruit soon. For information on the ACPQ, please write to acpq@globetrotter.net. Its website, which is still under construction, will be available at www.acpq.ca.