



Department Representatives Bulletin

Following is a recap of the Department Representatives meeting of November 20, 2019.

The meeting was chaired by Faculty Association President, Paul Rogers.

For further information on any item, please contact the Faculty Association office:

Email: faculty.association@tuca.com, phone: (403) 220-5722

Wage Reopener

Sheila Miller, Executive Director reported that the wage reopener that was scheduled for September/October 2019 was delayed due to the Government of Alberta's intervention. She noted that the arbitration is now scheduled to occur on December 2 and 3, 2019.

She reported that both sides have submitted their respective positions and briefs to the arbitrator.

Miller indicated that it is her belief that the Association has a strong position with plenty of information, facts, etc. to back it up.

Members expressed questions and concerns regarding the ability of the University to not follow through with their commitment of nothing less than 0% and the power of the arbitrator to impose something outside of the Government's mandated 2% cut. Miller noted that both sides have to act on the recommendations of the arbitrator but that it is unknown what the Government may do.

USRI

President Paul Rogers reported that the Association has filed a grievance regarding the USRI. He noted the association's view is that, the USRI results are biased in a number of ways and thus the USRI is a deeply flawed instrument that produces data that are inherently biased and if used to assess an instructor's teaching effectiveness constitutes a breach of the instructor's rights under the Alberta Human Rights Act. He noted that the

use of the USRI by the administration provides student users with an anonymous opportunity to harass instructors. The Faculty Association has taken the position that USRI results should be used for formative purposes, provided only to the academic staff member affected.

Rogers reported that the Provost has denied the grievance and it is now proceeding to an arbitration and that our sides person for the arbitration will be Jim Turk, former Executive Director of CAUT who is very experienced in these matters.

In the meantime, the USRI working Group continues and our rep on the committee (Rogers) has resigned.

Grievance Report:

This item was heard in Camera

University of Northern British Columbia Strike

Rogers reported that the UNBC academic staff is on strike (for at least 12 days at the time of the meeting). The Association has sent \$2,000 along with one of our members who has walked the picket line with the faculty there. He noted that there are many other Faculty Associations across the country that have provided support to UNBC either through cash donations and through flying pickets which are ways to show solidarity.

Western Regional

Rogers reported on the Western Regional conference held each year involving all faculty associations from Manitoba west. This year the conference was held in Regina. He noted that the overall theme was around “sustainability”. There were various sessions, including topics such as: how higher education can contribute to the advancement of responsible consumption and production (the UN’s SDG #12); Finance and Sustainability; Restorative Practices in the post-secondary environment; Freedom of Information, Transparency and the University.

He reported that perhaps the most interesting part of the conference was the reports from other Faculty Associations. He reported that Simon Fraser University Faculty Association has voted to transition to a defined benefit pension plan (he also noted that the cost associated with this change could be cost prohibitive); UNBC Faculty Association had (at the time of the conference) a strike mandate; University of Saskatchewan has settled for a five year agreement (two years retroactive -3%, 0,0, 1.5%, 1.9%) and they opted to cut their merit amounts in favour of adding money to base salaries. He noted that a number of institutions are looking for new Presidents including, Grant MacEwan, Manitoba, Victoria, Simon Fraser and Alberta.

Bill 20 & 21

Rogers provided a report on the provisions of Bill 20 and 21 which he believes impact our members.

Bills 20 and 21 are omnibus bills which means that they do many things simultaneously in a variety of different pieces of legislation. It is difficult to go through these and figure out what all of the changes are and what their impacts are. He noted that what he is reporting is his reading of the impact, but there could be others.

Bill 20 does a couple of things. First it eliminates new tuition credits and changes how tuition credits can be carried forward and transferred. He also noted that in addition to the increases in tuition under the Budget, the removal of tuition as a tax deduction will significantly increase the costs to some students and/or their parents. For

our members who are recent graduates, this could also significantly increase their costs if they can no longer carry forward the costs of their tuition. He reported that Bill 20 also modifies the Post-Secondary Learning Act by giving the Minister some power related to enrolment at institutions, transfers, and admissions. It is unclear what this means, but given the Government’s previous statements about consolidating programs, this could conceivably give the Minister the ability to close a program at one institution and move students to another with full credit at the receiving institution.

Rogers reported that Bill 21 gives the Cabinet the ability to terminate the agreement with the Alberta Medical Association. It also gives the Cabinet the ability to terminate any other agreement related to compensation matters under the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act. This could mean the AMHSP (Academic Medicine and Health Services Program) master agreement or individual agreements with our members under the AMHSP. This is troubling as it provides the ability for the government to interfere in agreements.

Rogers noted that the Public Service Employee Relations Act is changed by reversing what the NDP Government did regarding budget officers, systems analysts, and auditors. The NDP government made it so these types of job could belong to a union, so a few hundred people at the U of C were being put into AUPE as a result. The current government has reversed that, so the likelihood is that these people will now stay as MaPS members.

Bill 21 also gives the government more authority to change the interest on student loans and make other regulations.

Rogers reported, and most significantly, Bill 21 creates a new Public Sector Employers Act that gives the government the power to issue directives to all public sector employers under their authority (including our Board of Governors), which the authority must follow in bargaining. This includes the term of the agreement, the fiscal limits the employer must operate within, and other directives. This new Act requires the Governors to provide a wide variety of labour relations information to the government to ensure they comply with the

directives of the government. Further, the directives of the government regarding bargaining must be kept confidential by the Governors and cannot be disclosed to anyone without the consent of the Minister.

Department Representatives wondered what they can do personally with regards to these Bills. Rogers and Miller both suggested writing to the MLA/Ministers.

Government of Alberta Budget

Rogers reported that under the provincial budget, the total operating grant for Advanced Education has been reduced by 12% over 4 years. Both the University of Alberta and University of Calgary (U of C) are getting a 6.9% cut to the 'Campus Alberta' grant (the operating grant) in the current fiscal year (the one that is more than half over). He noted that this is a reduction of almost \$33 million for the U of C. Funding through the Infrastructure Maintenance Program (IMP) has also been "suspended" for one year (an impact of \$22.5M to the U of C). Universities will be able to increase tuition by 7% per year on average for each of the next three years. There is a new funding model coming in 2020/21 that will be performance based and will reward institutions for finding efficiencies. The overall goal is to reduce compensation at post-secondary institutions by 7.8%, although they say this will be mainly through attrition.

The budget does not directly address the wage reopener, but states that "further reductions (in staffing) may be necessary to accommodate for awards through arbitration in 2019/20."

The current year Campus Alberta Grant cuts were supposedly based on each institution's "ability to absorb" a cut. Specifically, the Government of Alberta cut most institutions by almost 50% of their five-year-average annual "surplus" (for fiscal years ending 2014 through 2018). While this might look reasonable at first blush, the method they used to determine the surplus includes donations to the endowment, and unspent endowment income. This dramatically overstates the U of C's true surplus.

University of Calgary Budget Town Hall

Rogers noted that some Department Representatives may have attended (in-person or online) the University of Calgary Town Hall on Monday November 18, 2019 on the Government of Alberta budget and its implications for the U of C hosted by the President, Provost, and Vice-President (Finance and Services). He noted that he was one of the approximately 1,500 who did attend, and he noted the following items of interest:

- Both the President and Provost stressed the theme of "shared responsibility" for dealing with the budget cuts – i.e. all stakeholders need to bear some of the burden.
- Around 250 positions have been/are being "cut":
 - Around 100 positions through "vacancy savings", retirements, and resignations. He noted that there are some academic staff included here.
 - Around 150 positions through terminations, affecting the AUPE, MaPS, and SLT employee groups. The first of these cuts will take place later in November, and the second set in mid-January.
- Additional position cuts should be expected next fiscal year.
- With respect to budget planning for the 2020-2021 year, there will be differential cuts to "units" (presumably, this includes Faculties or Departments).
- The Provost stated that she is not aware of any Government of Alberta direction relating to salary rollbacks, though she did acknowledge that there may be some challenging bargaining mandates. [He noted that once Bill 21 is in force, any such directives would be secret].
- Both the Provost and the VP (Finance) stated that voluntary retirement packages are being considered for all employee groups.
- AUPE is hosting an "information picket" on Thursday 21st November between noon and 1pm in the Taylor Quad (between the library and Mac Hall). Academic staff are invited to attend/participate. Rogers committed to send out a link to the membership with the details

of that “information picket” and encouraged members to attend.

Department Representatives expressed a number of concerns and questions regarding the potential effect of the Budget and legislation discussed today on their pensions. Rogers reported that although the current state of the pension plan is unaffected, there is no way to predict what, if anything, the Government of Alberta could or would do that would affect the plan. He reminded the Department Representatives that the UAPP website has some good information and planning tools which the membership should look at. www.uapp.ca. Rogers committed to sending out some more details regarding the Budget next week.

Department Representatives asked some questions regarding the new “regulations” around outside employment. Rogers noted that this is a result of the recent Code of Conduct implemented in July and suggests that members look at the FAQ for more information and details.

https://www.ucalgary.ca/hr/code_conduct_faqs

Representatives provided their opinion on the “Idea Scale” mentioned at the town hall and the possible detrimental effects some ideas could have on the University overall.

NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

Thursday December 19, 2019

12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Location:

EDC 280