



Department Representatives Bulletin

Following is a recap of the Department Representatives meeting of October 7, 2020.

The meeting was chaired by Faculty Association President, David Stewart.

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

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

Welcome and Call to Order

President David Stewart acknowledged that the meeting was being held on the traditional territories of the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta. The City of Calgary is also home to Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3.

He welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the 2020/21 academic year.

He noted that he was joined by Sheila Miller, the Faculty Association Executive Director, and Terry Hathaway, the Faculty Association Business Officer.

Stewart hoped all had a good break over the summer, although he noted any afterglow from a summer break has worn off by now. He noted that for himself and for the office, it was a weird and hectic summer and that Miller and he will be reporting on many issues over the course of this meeting.

He also noted some information about the use of ZOOM. He reported that at the start of all of the Association's ZOOM meetings, attendees are reminded that we are not recording anything electronically and would ask for confirmation that no one is recording anything beyond written note taking. The use of ZOOM can be difficult as it is

sometimes harder to get a "sense of the room".

Bargaining

This item was heard IN-CAMERA.

COVID-19 Pandemic Issues/Agreement

Stewart reported that, as one would expect there has been a lot of work done on issues related to the pandemic over the last few months. He noted that he has been a member of the Academic Crisis Management Task Force which has now been disbanded. At that table he raised a number of concerns related to the availability of technology and facilities for our members, the workload of members, cleaning protocols, and so on.

He noted that discussions back in June resulted in an agreement that former President, Paul Rogers, reported on in the newsletter. That agreement included a couple of new elements including sick time for sessional instructors who become ill due to COVID-19 and an extension of the agreement restraining the use of USRIs to only be released to course instructors.

He noted that the agreement also stated that:

“Should the pandemic continue in such a way that it is contemplated that academic staff members will be requested to work from home, or that courses are taught on-line in the Winter 2021 semester, the Parties will meet to discuss further deviations to the Collective Agreement that may be required. Such a meeting shall be scheduled as soon as such an eventuality becomes clear.”

Stewart reported that the Provost announced in September that they would be proceeding with on-line teaching in the Winter term and contacted the Association about meeting to discuss this further. Mary-Ellen Tyler (the Association’s Vice-President), Miller and he met with the Provost about this a few weeks ago. The Administration is interested in having more courses taught in the classroom. He noted that the Association thought we had an understanding related to how courses in Winter Term would work, with the understanding that how the courses would be delivered would be left up to the individual academic staff member. He noted that what came out from the Provost after our meeting suggested that an “academic unit” would make a determination. He reported that this was different than what the Provost had said at the meeting. His sense is that the reality is if a member did not want to teach in person, they would likely not be forced to do so unless there are clear program requirements. He noted that the Association would certainly be willing to intervene in any case where a member was inappropriately being forced to teach in person.

He noted that at the meeting, the Association brought up a number of items with the Administration. We asked that the wording of the existing MOA be affirmed and also improved to include some specific items (T2200s, people scheduled for RSLs starting in January, a one-time bump in

PER). He reported that the Administration said they would get back to us, but so far we have not heard from them and that was two weeks ago.

He noted that the agreement from last winter also requires that we have discussions related to the tenure/promotion system as impacted by COVID-19 and we have not had those discussions as of yet.

He reported that he had noted in the UTODAY release last week that “The Flanagan Foundation gifted the Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning a \$1 million grant to meet the immediate challenges of moving to online learning”. It will be interesting to see if this might be used in part for the expenses faculty have incurred in moving in this direction. He plans to raise this with the Provost.

Separate from all of this, the Association signed an agreement dealing with a number of new hires who were unable to enter the country but were to start work on July 1. The University ended up paying them in their home countries to do remote work but needed the Association to agree to recognize their service for things like vacation and tenure once they make it in the country. They are all supposed to be here by January 1; we will follow up to make sure this is all in place or whether there needs to be a subsequent agreement.

He reported that in addition to our discussions with the Provost, our office has been hearing from people regarding a number of issues as would be expected. There have been a number of problems with resources and struggles with technology; there have been workload issues, problems dealing with childcare and family responsibilities, and issues related to the problems with travel and conducting research.

A Department Representative asked is there is a “plan” from Administration on what happens if a member has to isolate during teaching (ie: a substitute instructor). Stewart noted that the Administration has a link on their website related to teaching during the pandemic.

<https://ucalgary.ca/provost/teaching-learning/covid-19-academic-staff-faq>

He noted that this is still a work in progress related to negotiating a new Memorandum of Agreement.

A Department Representative asked if a member has already scheduled their RSL will they be able to change that schedule due to the pandemic and travel restrictions. Stewart noted that the current MOA is not clear on that point and that the Association will look into that point.

A Department Representative asked is there were any discussion regarding hybrid classroom (where some students are in class and other, namely international students, are online. Will Technology or monetary resources be available? Stewart noted that this is likely something that should be discussed with the Department head when scheduling to find a location that would be acceptable. The University has resources to make this happen.

Grievance Report

This item was heard IN-CAMERA

Member Engagement Task Force

Stewart reported that one of his main reasons for running as President was to revitalize some of member engagement practices. So, at the first Personnel Committee meeting this year, he asked the committee to establish a Member Engagement Task Force to look into the matter. He noted that the members of the

Task Force are: Himself; Hamid Habibi (Biological Sciences); Nigel Caulkett (Vet Clinical & Diagnostic Science); Melanee Thomas (Political Science); Marie-Andrée Bergeron (SLLLC) and Justine Wheeler (LCR). He noted that the task force is advisory to the Executive Committee and is to review existing governance strategies, practices (e.g. mailman usage, surveys, department rep meetings, workshops), and tools of the Association related to the engagement of the Association’s membership or parts thereof (e.g. website, newsletter, Department Rep Bulletins, Bargaining Bulletins). He noted that he would like to have the committee report by December, if possible. Part of their mandate is also to consult with the Board of Directors, Department Representatives, the membership and staff. Aside from informing the Department Representatives of this initiative, his reason for putting this on the agenda is to start that consultation. He noted that the Task Force may more specific questions as this unfolds but today, he simply asked the open-ended question of what things the Department Representatives would like to see changed regarding member engagement by the Association. He is hoping we can have a short discussion today about this, but that any comments or suggestions could be submitted to Miller or himself to pass them along to the full Task Force.

He noted that the association does have a broad communication strategy and that we will be looking at that later in the year; but the role of the Task Force right now is just those matters related to engaging the membership, not the government, community, administration, or other stakeholders. Those are important but are a separate exercise.

Stewart noted that roughly 2/3 of Departments have not yet elected

Department Representatives in spite of requests from the Association. He hopes that this task force will help.

Growth Through Focus

Stewart reported that in June, the University President announced his “Growth Through Focus” initiative. Much like “Eyes High”, the rhetoric is for undefined “excellence”, “reputation” and “innovation”. What is not clear is what is being left out of this new focus. There is a suggestion of increasing revenue to \$2 billion through “alternative revenue”, but again, the nature of this alternative revenue is vague. Rather than an academic-led collegial governance process, he noted that they have an Executive Leadership Team (ELT) led Task Teams that solicit feedback. He noted that following that announcement, he wrote to the President about this and asked for a commitment for full disclosure, but the response he got back suggests that the view of academic staff will not be separated out.

Stewart reported that he was struck by the lack of transparency in the process. The slides accompanying the survey material indicate that “views are not necessarily representative of the University of Calgary community” and do not always indicate majority opinion. There is no breakdown of who the respondents were, that is, what groups they were drawn from, just the overall numbers. He noted that the Association has no idea what in particular academic staff and students thought about these items and what % they made up of the respondents. He believes that the Association has learned our lesson from the Eyes High consultations that the responses of academic staff are likely to remain hidden. We are still battling to get the Eyes High results from the Information Commissioner.

Stewart noted that this is clearly not a collegially created plan, but an ELT plan that draws on some views it obtains in various rather murky consultations. There are references to ELT-led Task Teams, but nothing on their mandate or composition. The president notes meeting with a number of stakeholders, but it is disappointing that faculty are not among them. Their feedback was added to the survey responses and shared with Senior Leadership Team and the Board of Governors. It will come to GFC on Thursday.

Stewart reported that there were real concerns expressed about financial inequity and what will happen in areas that are not the chosen ones. The impact on this for workload, tenure, promotion, hiring and merit are likely to be significant. Stewart believes that there is real cause for alarm here. Until we know what is being announced, the timeline or process for any decisions, it's unclear how to proceed. At this point, it is difficult to know what exactly to ask our membership about, since the statements from the President so far are relatively vague. However, as this unfolds, the Association may want to send out a survey regarding their views on this initiative to provide them an independent voice.

He noted that there is “Town Hall” scheduled on October 13, 2020.

https://ucalgary.ca/president/unstoppable?utm_source=president/growth-through-focus&utm_medium=redirect&utm_campaign=redirect

Assessment and COVID-19

Miller noted that the deadline for the responses to the Association survey was on Friday October 9, 2020, and that the Association staff are currently pulling together the final results of the survey. She noted that the office gave some preliminary

results to the Board of Directors at their meeting on October 6, 2020. As a result of those responses, she will be reaching out to the Provost to discuss possible changes to the assessment process for this next year. She noted that they are required to meet with the Association on this according to the Memorandum of Agreement that we signed, but that the Association does not have “a hammer behind the door to force them to agree to anything”.

She noted that what the survey showed is that members don't want it to be business as usual in the assessment process next year. Members clearly want the pandemic situation to be taken into account. Certainly, the Association will be advocating for a solution that does not harm members who could not do their research or teaching due to the pandemic.

Miller noted that, the U of A came to an agreement with their Administration to use the average of the last three assessments as a baseline (they are on a one-year cycle). People can either take that average increment, or they could have the Faculty Merit Committee review their APR. She did not say the Association would necessarily do that, but it is interesting to see how they resolved the issue.

A Department Representative asked about the use of the USRI in assessment, Stewart noted that during the time from January 2020 to April 2021, no information with regards to USRI is to be used unless requested by the instructor and that the Association continues to work on evaluation with the Administration.

Government Relations/Alberta 2030

Stewart reported that over the summer, he and Miller met with the Minister of Advanced Education. He, the Minister, seemed to understand a number of our concerns. At

one point he actually said that academic salaries at the UofC were not the problem. Stewart noted that one of the issues that we discussed was the status of the Association under both the Labour Relations Code and the Post-Secondary Learning Act which causes us some problems. He noted that he will be following up with the Minister on that issue. While he tends to be open with us, it does not appear that his Ministry is.

Stewart reported that at the meeting with the Minister he seemed to understand our unique position being outside of Confederation of Alberta Faculty Associations (CAFA) but representing about a quarter of the University academic staff in the province. He also understood that our views might be different than that of CAFA. He clearly signalled that he wanted to keep the lines of communication open with us. However, the next day the Association found out that the Ministry intended that only one academic staff member from the entire system would be involved. They told the Alberta Colleges and Institutes Faculties Association (ACIFA), CAFA and us that we had to come to an agreement as to who would represent us. ACIFA immediately intervened and said that their interests are completely different than those of the University academic staff. The Ministry quickly acquiesced and thus, ACIFA was given a separate seat at the table. This left us and CAFA. Clearly CAFA was not going to agree to Stewart representing them at this table. So, we came to an understanding that the CAFA President, would represent the university academic staff; however, Stewart would be invited to all meetings of the CAFA Officers where he reported on those discussions and where we disagreed with the positions of CAFA, the CAFA President committed to present our views separately at the table.

Stewart reported that he has been collaborating with CAFA on this, having been given little choice, as they were clearly involved in setting up the consultations and we were not. He noted that he has been participating in discussions with the presidents of all university Faculty Associations on a biweekly basis and is receiving the materials that the guiding coalition gets and has opportunities to suggest how this might proceed.

Stewart noted that what he has discovered is that there is at least a two-stage parallel process. The guiding coalition that the CAFA President sits on and a series of round tables related to the key topics. The connection between these prongs is unclear. Stewart reported that he participated in a round table on financial viability.

He noted that at that round table, there was discussion around student outcomes as the primary goal of the Post Secondary Education (PSE) system, but some disagreement on what those outcomes should be. From some of the business representatives there was a clear belief that universities should be vocationally focused and ensure that graduates were ready to take on private sector jobs with no more training needed. There was some push back on this, and some debate about the importance of Liberal Arts and basic science education.

Most people who expressed a view indicated a preference for a formula to be established and communicated about how PSE would be funded by the govt, but although those leading the discussion wanted it to move to metrics that did not happen. Stewart's sense is that there was a desire for more predictable funding that would be more transparent.

He noted that there was also much discussion around the meaning of "duplication" as something that needed to be reduced. It is unclear what is meant by duplication and a need for greater clarity on that was expressed.

Stewart's overall view is that the Round Table was not particularly useful. He expressed the view that faculty felt they were going to be scapegoated and targeted in attempts to deal with "financial viability" and he was not reassured that this will not prove to be the case. It was instructive (and somewhat chilling) to hear the views of those from the business community who are serving on various Boards of Governors. The main area where there was substantial agreement was in getting the government to allow more flexibility to individual institutions to respond to financial issues; in particular, in managing assets and reserves to handle potential shortfalls.

He reported that the last session was on University governance and it seems clear that there is some interest in revisiting the existing bicameral nature. There was a suggestion in the briefing notes that GFCs are too dominated by academics and that this is not in the province's best interests.

Stewart noted that the issue of compensation came up briefly, students expressing the view that faculty were paid too much, and this was driving up their tuition fees. Executive compensation was discussed, but there was not a clear understanding that this was not part of labour negotiations. CAFA, at his suggestion, raised the issue of secret bargaining mandates and the negative impact this has on Post Secondary Institutions (PSI) autonomy and climate.

Although the Guiding coalition has now completed the sessions dealing with the Kinsey Report issues, it will continue to

meet for discussion every two weeks through early December.

He noted that it emerged at the last meeting that the participation of CAFA in the process was the subject of internal debate. Some Association presidents had wanted to boycott the process on the assumption that participation would be ineffective.

There was a desire to discuss CAFA's participation going forward and it seemed clear that they would decide this internally and let him know after.

At this point, much like the U of C's Growth Through Focus initiative, we are in a "wait and see" situation. This could be major, and the Association may need to take various forms of political action; or the changes may not be directed towards us. Certainly, in the discussions with the Minister, his target seemed to be about the many colleges with low enrollments. Stewart would wager that, while the U of C may not be the intended target, there will likely be collateral damage we will need to deal with.

He noted that on there is a Government website (<https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-2030-building-skills-for-jobs.aspx>) where members can go to the Alberta government website and make your voice heard. The questions are somewhat leading and certainly give you a sense of where the government is heading. According to the website, they are into their "strategic design choices" phase of their strategy and intend to announce something by the end of October. The legislature is scheduled to commence their Fall Sitting on October 20 and they are scheduled to sit through December 3. He noted that the Association will keep monitoring this and will keep you informed.

Handbook Working Group

Stewart reported that the discussions by the Handbook Working Group have been separated between Part I of the Handbook which focuses on the criteria for tenure, promotion, transfer, and merit assessment; and Part II of the Handbook that deals with hiring. GFC only has jurisdiction regarding criteria related to tenure, promotion, transfer, and merit assessment as the process components for those items reside in the Collective Agreement. Hiring, on the other hand, is completely in the control of GFC (except for the hiring of Sessionals), so Part II deals with both criteria and process.

He noted that despite the pandemic, changes to the Handbook seemed to be a major priority of the Administration. So, they have been working on this steadily through the Spring and Summer. The Association had submitted a long list of concerns regarding Part I of the Handbook in May which seemed to refocus some of the discussions. The Working Group continued working through the summer, consulting with various groups and discussing a number of unresolved issues. The result is a draft of Part I of the Handbook that is going to GFC for discussion this week. The result of those discussions and any other input received will be going back to the Handbook Committee in two weeks to redraft and send a final version to GFC for them to vote on before the end of the year.

He noted that while Part I is not perfect, it is much better than where we began. If you are interested in seeing the Part I draft that is going to GFC, contact the Association office and we will send that out to you. If you have any comments please send them to us in the next week or so, so that we can forward those to the Handbook Working Group as they work on the final draft.

Stewart reported that Part II of the Handbook is still in draft mode. He will be making a submission to the Working Group about the Association's concerns in the next few weeks. Part of the struggle with Part II is that there clearly needs to be some deference to the Faculty Councils as the processes for various positions need to vary due to the nature of the work. For example, the hiring of limited term part-time clinical instructors may not require the same rigour of process as a tenured CRC Chair. At the same time, we want there to be University-wide standards, transparency, accountability, and appropriate collegial processes to make sure the Deans can't simply make arbitrary decisions. He noted that the Association would appreciate hearing any comments about the hiring processes or criteria as we prepare our submission.

New Business

Stewart opened the meeting for general discussion.

A Department Representative expressed concern regarding the situation developing in Libraries Cultural Resources (LCR) regarding the new contract the University has with HathiTrust. Miller noted that the Association is aware and is working on this issue.

A Department Representative expressed concern with the issue that education must be productive to be important.

A Department Representative indicated their concern regarding the security of emails coming from the University. The emails do not sufficiently indicate their importance or that they are indeed official emails from the University.

A Department Representative indicated that there are potential issues in some areas where groups are feeling left out due to the

fact that they are not in the usual teaching steam.

A Department Representative indicated their concern regarding Academic Integrity and the issue of cheating by students. He is concerned with the workload being created to ensure that students are not "cheating". Stewart indicated that this is something that the University is solely responsible for, but that if it is significantly increasing member workload, the Association would like to hear about this and see if something can be pursued.

NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

Thursday November 19, 2020

12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

ZOOM

Details of the ZOOM meeting to be distributed prior to meeting.