

The Faculty Association: An Overview

The Faculty Association is established under the *Post-Secondary Learning Act* and is a trade union for the purposes of bargaining. Therefore, it is subject to the province's *Labour Relations Code*, as well as the *Post-secondary Learning Act*. The Faculty Association's primary functions are to negotiate the terms of employment for its members, to protect the interests of academic staff through the filing of grievances where appropriate, and to represent the academic staff.

Academic staff express their collective interests in the University through the Faculty Association of the University of Calgary under joint agreements arranged through negotiations with the Board of Governors. This role was formalized in 1981 through amendments to the *Universities Act*, which granted the Association responsibility for negotiating collective agreements with the Board on behalf of the academic staff. The role was confirmed in the *Post-secondary Learning Act* in 2004. Further, in 2017, Faculty Associations were brought under the province's *Labour Relations Code*. This change also established the Faculty Association as a trade union for the purposes of bargaining.

Being an academic in a university setting means taking some responsibility for the University as a whole, and particularly defending the rights of colleagues for the academic freedoms and processes that are unique to our environment. This is necessary because as scholars we know well what a university should be and why society needs good universities. The traditions of good universities must be protected, and this protection must come from the academics that make up universities. It is the role of the Faculty Association to do just that: to ensure individual faculty members have equal access to justice, and that proper policies and procedures are in place to ensure that this goal is achieved. A 'fair environment' that discourages favouritism and protects faculty members from arbitrary decisions is the essential foundation of an intellectually independent and open university.

What the Association Does:

1. Negotiates the *Collective Agreement* with the Board of Governors

Under procedures established in the *Collective Agreement*, an Association committee negotiates the salary and benefits agreements (Schedules "A" and "B") and the *Collective Agreement* whenever it comes up for renewal. The Board of Directors is kept fully informed during negotiations and ultimately makes the decision to present any tentative settlement before the membership (with or without a recommendation) for ratification. Further to this, if a tentative agreement cannot be reached or is not accepted, under the *Labour Relations Code*, both Parties can agree to voluntary arbitration; the Association membership can vote to go on strike; or conversely, the Governors can decide to lock out academic staff.

Members of the Association have the opportunity to participate in the consultative process that guides the Association's bargaining endeavours. Within the limits of confidentiality inherent in the negotiating process, Department Representatives are kept up-to-date as to the status of negotiations, and participate in the ratification of the final contract. Full participation in the consultative process is sought, and Department Representatives are briefed on the status of the negotiations.

2. Protects Academic Staff Interests (Grievances)

The Faculty Association works to resolve conflicts between members and the administration. Whenever possible, the Association strives to resolve conflicts informally. Where appropriate, the Association works formally through the filing of grievances. The Faculty Association maintains control or carriage of all grievances and brings them forward on behalf of an individual academic staff member as per the process in the *Collective Agreement*.

When an academic staff member contacts the Faculty Association office, they will reach a Faculty Association staff member who will treat the call or email with the utmost confidentiality. Faculty Association staff are not employees of the University of Calgary. The elected officers of the Faculty Association are not informed of any confidential personal information without the member's consent.

3. Promotes Academic Staff Interests

The Association names representatives to serve as non-voting members on faculty and university-wide committees which deliberate on important matters such as tenure and promotion, and the assessment of performance and award of merit increments. The Association's watchdog role helps to ensure fairness in these proceedings and helps to establish equity in the treatment of staff in the various disciplines. The Association also jointly appoints representatives with the University to various committees involved in assessment, and tenure and promotion including the General Merit Committee (GMC), Tenure Appeal Committee (TAC) and the Promotion Review Committee (PRC).

4. Represents Academic Staff in the Councils of the University

Association representatives sit on the General Faculties Council (the principal arena in which academic policy is formulated), on the Board of Governors' Budget Committee, on the Academic Planning and Priorities Committee and on several other committees established for the governance of the University such as the Research and Scholarship Committee and the Teaching and Learning Committee.

The Association's representatives on academic committees are relied upon to ensure due process and to speak for the academic interests of all academic staff. The importance of this activity cannot be minimized. The Association actively submits briefs and makes oral submissions to committees of the University as they affect our membership.

5. Speaks for the Academic Staff in the Public Forum

The Faculty Association participates in public discussion of issues affecting post-secondary education and research and attempts to ensure that the interests of academic staff are attended to in the halls of government, both federal and provincial. As much as possible, the Association tries to cooperate with the other parts of the campus community for effective public and government relations. The Faculty Association is non-partisan and works to maintain active communication with government ministers and key civil servants to advocate for the interests of academic staff and the broader mission of the University.

The Faculty Association is an organizational member of the **Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT)**, the national organization of academics. Through our membership in CAUT we are able to lobby nationally on issues of importance to our members, such as transfer payments, academic freedom, casualization of the academic workforce (the misuse of sessional instructors), corporatization of universities, equity issues, copyright issues, etc. CAUT provides information and interpretation of academic traditions such as academic freedom and tenure, and formulates positions and guidelines on new developments as they affect academic institutions. CAUT publishes the CAUT Bulletin, which includes policy statements, commentary and news – local, national and international – of academic interest and includes announcements and advertisements of academic positions.

6. Provides Information to Members

Information on Association matters and topics of professional interest are routinely provided to members. Depending on the nature of the communication, the Association may choose to send information to its members through email or by regular mail. General information is also available on the Faculty Association website (tucfa.com). Specific information pertaining to an individual's unique situation is best acquired by contacting the Association directly.

The Organization of the Faculty Association

The Association is governed in accordance with the by-laws of the Association. Association policy is set by the elected members of the Board of Directors. Day-to-day management of the affairs of the Association is overseen by the Executive Committee. This committee operates under the policy directions and delegated authority of the elected members of the Board, with the assistance of Association staff members. Board members are unsalaried volunteers.