



Department Representatives Bulletin

Following is a recap of the Department Representatives meeting of April 28, 2021.

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@ucfa.com, phone: (403) 220-5722

Election Committee Report

Miller reported the results of the recent election of the Association Board of Directors. Justine Wheeler (LCR), Nigel Caulkett (Veterinary Medicine), and David Scollnik (Math and Statistics) were re-elected to the Board; Francine Smith (Physiology & Pharmacology) will be returning to the Board, and Lindsay Tedds (Economics/SPP) is a newly elected member. Polly Knowlton Cockett (Werklund) had been previously acclaimed in the sessional seat.

It was noted that this was the first time the Association used Simply Voting as our electronic election platform and by all accounts it was a success.

COVID-19 Pandemic Issues

Stewart reported that since the last meeting, the Minister of Advanced Education has made a statement about the return to classes, as well as discussion in various forums. In general, suffice it to say that while everyone seems to be hoping for expanded in-person classes in the fall, all of the wording has been tentative. So, for example, the Minister does not give a directive to return, but talks about “begin[ning] preparations for return”. The Administration is in the same situation – they hope that the situation with vaccinations and variants will allow for expanded in-person learning in the fall but there is still a lot of uncertainty.

Stewart noted that he and Miller met with the outgoing Provost, (the now outgoing) Deputy Provost and the Associate Vice President (Human Resources) to discuss a new Memorandum of Agreement related to COVID. He noted that since that time we have come to an understanding and signed a Memorandum of Agreement. Stewart reported that most of the provisions were included in the email sent out by the Provost last week – he reported on some specific points:

* Anyone on a tenure-track appointment will be able to get an automatic deferral; however, unlike last year they will have to apply to the Dean for this. He noted that members do not have to defer their applications but can if they wish.

* Anyone with an RSL that was due to start on July 1, 2021 will be able to delay their leave if the RSL has been impacted by the pandemic (i.e. due to travel restrictions or public health guidelines).

* Any Sessionals who become ill with COVID will receive sick time while they are ill through the Spring and Summer.

* USRIs will be collected. The use of USRIs in tenure/promotion or other processes will be at the discretion of the academic staff member. He noted that the USRI information will be available to Department Heads (and equivalents) but that the information can only be used for “formative”

feedback related to help improve teaching, but cannot be used as a “summative” tool for assessment purposes.

Stewart reported that he and Miller will be meeting with the Provost again next month to discuss possible further deviations to the Collective Agreement that may be required for the fall.

He noted that the Association and the Administration disagree on the “right” of academic staff to decide on the means of teaching their classes (on-line vs face-to-face) and that that discussion is ongoing.

Stewart noted that the email from the Provost on April 27, 2021 indicated that:

* there will likely be a substantial increase in face-to-face learning in the fall, provided provincial guidelines allow.

* One of the priorities of any decision will be ensuring the health and safety of our entire campus community, faculty, students and staff.

*An acknowledgment of the potential increased workload of creating class content in a dual modality.

He noted that members are to approach their department chair, head, or dean to discuss any concerns.

Stewart also reported that the Academic Crisis Management Task Force has been discussing possible guidelines to deal with the partial return to face-to-face teaching this Fall.

A Department Representative asked whether or not they were required to make two plans for classes in the fall (one online and one face-to-face). They noted that when they questioned their department head, they were told to ask the Association. Stewart noted that the Provost’s email indicated “that members are to approach their department chair, head or dean to discuss any concerns”. He will investigate this matter specifically.

Public Interest Alberta (PIA)

Stewart reported that on March 27 PIA and the Calgary area groups participated in a drive around protest at the McDougall Centre. He noted that he was on site with an AUPE rep, a Student rep from MRU and the MRU Faculty Association President, with our Faculty Association promotional banner. He indicated that the number of people involved in the media portion was limited due to COVID restrictions.

Stewart noted that he was interviewed by three media outlets on the subject, but that it seemed that the actual media coverage of the event was somewhat limited.

Stewart reported that he continues to meet with this group on a bi-weekly basis and will continue to cooperate with them. He noted that he is looking forward to building “partnerships” with some of the groups involved.

University of Calgary Book Store

Stewart noted that the Association has been approached by various members as well as the AUPE to comment on the current situation developing at the University Bookstore. Stewart will speak with Justin Huseby (AUPE) on this matter.

Universities Academic Pension Plan

<http://www.uapp.ca/media/1292/2020-ar-highlights-plus-spring-2021-communicue.pdf>

Stewart reported that the link (above) is to the UAPP Spring Communique that gives highlights on the Annual Report. He noted that the full Annual Report can be found on the UAPP website under “publications”.

He noted that he is not a pension expert and asked that questions be directed to the Association Office (he will ensure that any questions asked at the meeting are presented to the office).

Stewart provided some brief comments made by the Association Trustee and Sponsor Representative.

One of the things to note in the Communique on page 2. Under the column regarding Post-1991, you will note that the plan is 101.3% funded as of December 31, 2020. That is great news. However, the pre-92 part of the plan continues to decline in its funded ratio. That is expected, as it is a debt on the plan that we are paying off until 2043, but something that the Trustees will continue to watch.

The Trustees are currently undertaking an actuarial valuation of the plan as of December 31, 2020 (this happens about every two years). Based on their findings, the contribution rate will change, likely in July 2022.

Overall, the plan did okay on investments last year with a 6.2% return rate – better than many of the Alberta public sector plans, but it did not reach its benchmark targets. Of course, last year was a volatile investment year.

Laurentian University

Stewart reported that he has heard concerns from members about whether the situation at Laurentian University could happen here. He noted that one never knows so he was loath to promise that something couldn't happen here; however, the situation in Alberta is quite different than it is in Ontario

* In Alberta, the Universities are established under a Post-Secondary Learning Act, so we all have the same rules and report through the Ministry of Advanced Education. In Ontario, the Universities generally have individual charters, so their governance is separate.

*Currently in Alberta, all of the Board of Governors members are appointed by the Government. At Laurentian, the provincial government appoints some of the members of their Board, but many are appointed by the Board of Governors itself.

* Currently the Board of Governors in Alberta are required to present a balanced budget and can only have a deficit budget with the approval of the Minister. This would make it difficult for one of the Alberta Universities to declare bankruptcy without implicating the provincial government as liable for the situation.

He noted, that despite all of this, he is not claiming that a Laurentian situation would be impossible.

Stewart noted that at the CAUT Council meeting this last week, there was a unanimous resolution in support of Laurentian academic staff. There was also an Emergency Resolution that was carried that instructed CAUT to call for the resignations of the Laurentian University President, the Provost, the VP Administration, the Board Chair, the Registrar, and the Ontario Minister of Colleges and Universities, for their roles in creating the financial crisis that has devastated the public university. He noted that the Association Board of Directors is working on a statement of support as well.

He noted that he has asked the Provost to provide some clarification as well and hopes that will provide some reassurance to the University Community.

University of Toronto Censure

Stewart reported that at the CAUT meeting last week, CAUT voted to censure the University of Toronto for its handling of the aborted hiring of a new director of the law school's international human-rights program.

He noted that the motion of censure against the university administration was passed by a vote of 79-0 Thursday by delegates to the Council of the CAUT. It means CAUT members are now asked to turn down all job offers, speaking engagements, conference invitations, honours or distinctions from the University of Toronto until it rectifies the situation. It also means that CAUT commits to publicizing the events in

question, including in academic publications around the world.

He noted that the controversy stems from the search for a new director of the law school's human-rights program in the fall of 2020.

Details about the matter can be found at:

<https://www.caut.ca/latest/2021/04/caut-council-imposes-rare-censure-against-university-toronto-over-azarova-hiring>.

Department Representatives asked if they are asked to be external examiners or to participate in Tenure and Promotion discussions, should they decline due to the censure? Stewart noted that he felt that the censure did include this type of activity, but that he would seek clarification from CAUT. Subsequent correspondence with CAUT indicated that acting as external examiners or reviewers is not explicitly covered in the policy on censure and is therefore left to the discretion of members.

Bargaining

This item was discussed In-Camera.

NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

Wednesday June 9, 2021

12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

ZOOM

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