



Department Representatives Bulletin

*Following is a recap of the Department Representatives meeting of June 2, 2021.
The meeting was chaired by Faculty Association President, David Stewart.
For further information on any item, please contact the Faculty Association office:
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David Stewart recognized that this was the final meeting of the 2020-2021 Academic year for the Department Representatives and thanked them for their participation and important feedback.

Growth Through Focus

Stewart provided a brief description of the latest version of the Draft Growth Through Focus Framework through a screen share.

He noted that a slightly revised version of the framework will go to GFC in June.

He drew attention to the addition of a new area of focus tentatively titled "Social Change and Equity". He noted that a full document on GTF that will go the GFC has not yet been shared.

A Department Representative asked about transdisciplinary scholarship and how "credit" will be shared amongst the contributors. Stewart noted that this is still unclear. He also indicated that President McCauley has stressed that the framework will be applied with attention to equity.

A Department Representative asked about how the extra work associated with the changes in the definition of Transdisciplinary Scholarship will be recognized when it is related to Merit or Tenure and Promotion. Stewart noted that he understands that, at this point, nothing will change with regards to the Merit or Tenure and Promotion processes.

A Department Representative noted that there is a lack of equity across the University campus, and they have some concerns about how equitable this framework will be. The Department Representative also noted that there is inequity related to the work of indigenous scholars, relationship building, and scholarly output throughout the campus. She noted that these issues will only increase when related to interdisciplinary scholarship.

The Department Representative also indicated their concerns that these issues of inequity will play out during the Merit/Tenure and Promotion process as it is usually the Primary Investigator who receives recognition, which becomes problematic with interdisciplinary scholarship.

Stewart noted that he understands the concerns and will share the membership's concerns with the GFC at the next meeting. He encouraged the Department Representatives (and all the Association members) to provide their feedback and concerns to the GFC reps from their faculties. He noted that the upcoming discussion at GFC is not the end of the process.

He noted that the input from the Membership is important and did cause the Administration to revise their plan.

Alberta 2030

Stewart noted that the Association released a newsletter late last week and hoped that the Department Representatives had a chance to

read it. He drew attention to the article on Alberta 2030 and reminded the Department Representatives that the Minister of Advanced Education released his long-awaited report at the end of April. Stewart noted that the Association is concerned about the strategy and are interested in getting more member input on the strategy.

Stewart noted that the strategy focuses on six goals:

(<https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-2030-building-skills-for-jobs.aspx>)

1. Improve Access and Student Experience
2. Develop Skills for Jobs
3. Support Innovation and Commercialization
4. Strengthen Internationalization
5. Improve Sustainability and Affordability
6. Strengthen System Governance

Stewart noted that the strategy appears optimistic but does tend to ignore the Government's actions to date. There are legitimate concerns about a focus on "preparing for a specific job or career" and the promotion of entrepreneurialism. He noted that there is a certain amount of ambiguousness related to the strategy as it moves through the next 9 years.

He noted that he has listed the Association's concerns in the newsletter article.

He relayed a few specific points related to the strategy:

#5: this item seems to be a call to increase tuition to reduce dependency on the Government for funding.

#6: his concern here is the potential weakening of the Collegial Governance.

He also noted his concern and the need to be clear that the University is not simply a vocational school. He asked the Department

Representatives for their comments on the strategy.

A Department Representative asked if, like the recently announced K-12 curriculum, there was any opportunity to reject the strategy. Stewart noted that the path forward is not clear. He is continuing to be involved with other organizations (PIA) to raise the Association's concerns. He has participated in the recent Townhall. His concern is that the strategy will not help to attract and retain high quality students and faculty.

A Department Representative asked, related to #5, how this strategy aligns with the Growth Through Focus (GTF). He noted that it seems to be that GTF is designed to create a new funding model to compensate for the lack of Government funding. He noted that there are over 100 new programs being developed for Graduate Studies across the University. There is no model in place which will actually see the money from these fees funneled back into the program.

Stewart noted that he felt that the GTF and AB2030 are aligned. He noted that the concept of internal revenue sharing is interesting and that we need to ensure that the Administration is providing adequate support to the programs.

A Department Representative indicated that their concern is that the larger University Community is being supported (ie: AUPE). Stewart noted that he participates in the Public Interest Alberta (PIA) group which also includes AUPE and Student representatives. He wants to co-operate with these organizations in areas where they feel our assistance would be helpful and is interested in hearing from them what they might find helpful.

Fall Teaching

Stewart noted that the Association is currently receiving many inquires related to Fall Teaching. With the government's reopening plans, and the Administration's comments about

resuming in person classes in the fall, the Association has had numerous members contact us with concerns about how to deal with things.

He noted that the situation is in a state of flux (and that the Administration is also needing to be fluid).

The Association is working to ensure that its concerns are taken to the Administration as directly as possible. He noted that it appears that not all units are being treated the same.

He noted that the recent email from the Provost indicated that all academic staff can communicate with their academic leader on the modality of teaching for the fall. If they are not satisfied with that, they can voice their concerns with the Dean.

Stewart reported that the entire process related to a return to campus is slowly developing and that the Administration will be following the guidelines of Alberta Health Services. He noted that the Administration is expecting there to be more and more face-to-face teaching. Accommodations will have to be made with respect to faculty and students. He did remind the Department Representatives that accommodations must be clear and have a legitimate basis.

A Department Representative expressed their concerns that they will be expected to have their teaching developed in both modes (on-line and face-to-face). Stewart noted that he believes that the Administration is hoping to have a number of courses available on-line but that there is no expectation to have all courses both face-to-face and on-line.

A Department Representative expressed their concerns that the modality of courses has only been changed for some programs and not others. They questioned whether or not they should be writing to their Dean. Stewart noted that the Provost's note indicated that modality concerns should be taken to Department Heads

first. Once they have spoken with their Head, members can speak directly with their Dean. He encouraged Association members to let the Association know their concerns.

A Department Representative noted their concern related to the IT support. They noted that the IT department has had some positions cut within it and they were concerned that those changes will affect IT service for on-line courses. Stewart reported that he will express that concern.

A Department Representative indicated that simply having online content of a face-to-face course is not that simple. She noted that once content goes online, there are issues which arise such as responding to discussions, technology related issues, and others. Although she noted that instructors are not necessarily "responsible" for these issues, she feels an obligation as the teacher, to address the student's issues.

A Department Representative wondered how they are supposed to give a face-to-face lecture while simultaneously recording the lecture, providing Power Point presentations and all of the other teaching support required. Stewart noted that the University is currently trying to deal with that issue as well, as it is not clear about the classroom capacity for this.

A Department Representative noted that one major issue related to the online scenario is assessment of students. He noted that assessment becomes very complicated online and that it is even more complicated when a course is both online and face-to-face at the same time. It is difficult to have a fair assessment between the two modes. There are different requirements for the two modes of teaching. Basically, he noted, that all assessment will have to move online. Stewart reported that he will bring up this point with the administration.

THANK YOU for your participation as a Department Representative.

Enjoy the Summer.