



## Department Representatives Bulletin

*Following is a recap of the Department Representatives meeting of November 18, 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@tuca.com](mailto: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.

### Pandemic Issues

*The Faculty Association welcomes comments and questions from its members on issues related to COVID and encourages academic staff to raise individual or general issues with the Association office as soon as they are of concern.*

Stewart reported that in discussions with the Administration about modalities for the winter term, the Association argued that members should determine whether to teach in person or online based on personal circumstances. Provost Teri Balsler insisted this is up to the Deans and Heads, who've been directed that anyone going online requires a doctor's letter. Stewart addressed this issue in the October Academic Views newsletter, urging members to get doctor's notes, saying that we would support them with accommodation issues.

On vaccine requirements, the Administration is trying to determine how many people must still be vaccinated and plans to put anyone who hasn't been by January 1 on leave without pay, except those with medical or religious exclusions. This means we'll likely see individual grievances in these matters.

While the Association has taken a pro-vaccine position, this doesn't mean we agree with the Administration's handling of the issue, such as prohibiting members to use up vacation time or placing people on leave without pay for not working on campus. The Administration's actions must be reasonable and fair.

The Association signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Provost, the main features being: sick time for sessionals has been extended; the USRI will be collected but not used by any committees; and those going on RSL were able to defer if their plans would be impacted due to the pandemic.

The Association has received questions from members about what rules are in place and how things will work during the winter term. The Administration is taking the position that, while staff must be vaccinated or go on leave, students won't be required

to be vaccinated or be deregistered. What's more, students are allowed to take classes remotely and members feel pressured to provide classes in dual modalities or some hybrid form. The Provost has said this isn't the case, but the question keeps arising. We're also awaiting word on how masking, social distancing, or other measures will work. While these rules are established by the province, they can make a difference to some members. The Association has been overwhelmed with COVID-related issues and cases, so much of our regular work has been set aside as we deal with the volume of cases.

Finally, Stewart recognized the stress these issues have had on many members and urged members to seek any supports needed, either through Homewood Health or their own practitioners as per the benefit plan. If people need to take sick time, they should do so as recommended by their health provider.

### **Government Relations**

Stewart discussed the Government of Alberta's Bill 74, noting that the most significant change was the introduction of the Minister's Advisory Council on Higher Education and Skills, to be composed of up to nine ministerial appointees. Its purpose is to advise the Minister on the strategic goals and direction of postsecondary education, metrics for measuring performance, and other issues deemed important to the minister. Stewart said there's nothing particularly surprising in the bill.

The Association met with the Minister of Advanced Education Demetrios Nicolaides to discuss Bill 74 and other items. Nicolaides indicated more changes are coming related to the governance of the

Universities – in particular, giving them more autonomy. The Association also raised issues related to budget, salaries, the labour code, and other components of the government's *Alberta 2030: Building Skills for Jobs initiative*.

### **Universal Student Ratings of Instruction**

Association Executive Director Sheila Miller provided an update on the USRI grievance, which the Association and Administration are trying to resolve while attempting to set a new arbitration date at the same time. A point of contention for the Association is that the Administration wants to talk about the form of a survey before defining its purpose. Attempts to arrange a meeting to resolve the issue have been unsuccessful. Miller noted the Association will likely provide more information to members, possibly in the next newsletter. Meanwhile, the Association is working on securing an arbitrator for the upcoming arbitration.

### **Bargaining**

Faculty Association Principal Negotiator, Hamid Habibi reported on this item IN-CAMERA.

#### ***NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING***

***Wednesday, December 15, 2021***

***12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.***

***By ZOOM***

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