
THE UWFA NEWS

Message from the President

By Hugh Grant, UWFA President

I trust you had a fruitful summer and have settled in to the new teaching term. The summer proved reasonably busy for UWFA on several fronts.

Internal/External Relations

The universities and faculty associations achieved some success in obtaining changes to Bill 63 (Advanced Education Administration Amendment and Council on Post-Secondary Education Repeal Act), including improved language on academic freedom and institutional autonomy. In light of his expressed intent to be more consultative in the future, Minister Allum met with the four Faculty Associations (Brandon, Manitoba, St. Boniface and Winnipeg) to outline the proposed Regulations to accompany the Act. The process was satisfactory.

Bill 63 also creates an advisory council to replace COPSE and the Minister was responsive to the request of the four Associations for a faculty representative on the committee. A meeting of the four Association Presidents is scheduled for the end of October in an effort to resuscitate the Manitoba Organization of Faculty Associations (MOFA), with the expectation that MOFA is the likely vehicle for choosing a faculty representative on the advisory committee.

Our communications with the University of Winnipeg Student Association have continued to improve through regular monthly meetings to discuss issues of common concern (credit to Peyton Veitch, UWSA Vice-President Advocate, for this initiative). As in previous years, UWFA contributed financially to UWSA's O-Week activities and our banner was prominently displayed on the front lawn of the campus.

We have also been meeting regularly with other campus unions (AESES, IUOE and PSAC) and we anticipate greater cooperation when discussing the University's proposal for a Flexible Benefits plan (see more elsewhere in this Newsletter). AESES expects to begin bargaining a new contract in the Winter term.

Finally, the UWFA Executive was invited to meet with President Trimbee in early September and it was a welcomed opportunity to advance a range of issues important to the faculty. The exchange was very positive and I believe other Executive members share my optimism in a constructive period under her leadership.

Collective Agreement Matters

Several items are outstanding from the last round of RAS bargaining, most to be addressed through the Labour Management Committee and its subcommittees. On the agenda are the salary structure for Librarians and Instructors, language on Technology-Assisted courses, the implementation of the New Tenure and Promotion procedures and course outlines. We have also met with our actuaries at Mercer and our legal counsel at the Myers Weinberg to explore all options for improvements in our pension plans.

Both the CAS and Collegiate contracts expire in April and our organizing for both negotiations is proceeding.

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Council has ratified the appointment of Bonnie Talbot as Chief Negotiator for the Collegiate.

Other Activities

It is gratifying that the UWFA Women and Equity Committee is meeting again regularly after a bit of a hiatus. Around 25 Members met in late September for lunch and a brainstorming session. Under the leadership of co-Chairs Michelle Owen and Lisa Sinclair, the WE Committee promises to be a forum for new ideas and collegial discussion leading to improved policies.

On September 25 UWFA co-hosted, along with the Office of the President, the Welcome Back Faculty Party. Thanks to Mark Golden for hosting the event on behalf of UWFA in his usual efficient and entertaining manner.

Finally, I want to thank the 25 people who gave up their Saturday in order to attend the RAS Retreat on September 27. The purpose was to consider what lessons were learned from the last round of collective bargaining in order to prepare better for the next round.

Hugh Grant

New Collegiate Music Program

by Bonnie Talbot, The Collegiate

The Collegiate and the Royal Winnipeg Ballet have enjoyed a partnership whereby ballet students in the RWB's professional division attend the Collegiate for their high school education. Building on this model, we have grown our involvement in and encouragement of the performing arts by initiating a music program and arts partnerships.

In September, the Collegiate launched its new music program with new ensemble space on the first floor of Bryce Hall. We offer high school courses in band and choral, and our music director teaches university-level courses in music appreciation and instrumental band ensemble. This ensemble is a way to bring students, faculty, and community members together through music.

In our efforts to provide our students with rich academic and cultural experiences, the Collegiate has partnered with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, Manitoba Theatre for Young People, and The Manitoba Conservatory of Music and Arts, which is now located in Bryce Hall.

These partnerships allow Collegiate instructors to work together with performing arts groups in the city to offer students an exceptional experience that goes beyond attending performances.

Contract Academic Staff Report

by Kim Bradshaw, Sociology; UWFA Council CAS Representative

Welcome back, everyone. I hope you all had a restful summer and are ready for the coming fall and winter terms. As your contract academic staff representative, the most important thing on my radar this year is the forthcoming contract renewal bargaining, with which I will be involved.

My own belief is that we should try and get contract academic staff access to the faculty health plan – many of you are probably in the same position as I am *vis a vis* health insurance; i.e., absent a spouse with access to benefits, we don't have any! This is, frankly, a gross injustice, and it is time this was remedied.

Inclusion in the health plan for contract academic staff has been broached in previous rounds of contract bargaining, but has always been dismissed by the administration as being “too expensive”. My thoughts on the matter, so far, are that we could be given the opportunity to buy into the plan at the same cost as regular faculty, which would be cheaper than buying insurance on our own.

My first suggestion is that, based on a three month contract, we should be able to get one year's coverage, with part of the cost being paid by the University of Winnipeg. The devil, of course, is in the details -- how much the University would contribute, and what level of coverage could be obtained, etc., would be matters for the bargaining committee to pursue.

If you have any comments or suggestions on this, or other issues that are likely to be raised in the bargaining, then please contact me: 204-918-0970; debra_k_bradshaw@shaw.ca; 6L31.

On 25 September 2014, UWFA and the Office of the President co-hosted the annual *Welcome Back Party*. In case you missed it, here are a few photos of the evening.



UWFA Bargaining Retreat

By Allison Surtees, Classics; UWFA Communications Officer

On September 27, twenty-five UWFA members met at the Fort Garry Hotel for a full day retreat to reflect on the most recent RAS bargaining process. Participants included the UWFA Executive, some members of the Negotiating Team and Council, and RAS members who were not directly involved in the process. This offered a wide variety of perspectives on a number of topics. Small group discussions led to the fruitful examination of a number of issues associated with the process. The goal of the day was to identify what worked well and what worked less well, in order to facilitate the process in the next round of bargaining.

The topics discussed fell broadly into two categories: organization and mandate. One of the issues with respect to organization is the relationship of the Negotiation Team to Council and the level of autonomy the Bargaining Team has/needs in the process. The Team needs to accurately reflect the interest of the membership, but also needs to have the power to bargain. The balance between the desire for broad consultation and the need to act quickly and decisively at the table is a difficult one to strike. Once a mandate has been given, the membership needs to be able to trust that the Team will come up with the best deal possible. It was generally agreed that a small advisory body, a Bargaining Committee, could help foster this trust and facilitate the process. Such a committee would be separate from Council, although it could include some representation from Council, and would be comprised of members of the various Advisory Committees (Salary & Benefits, Workload, Equity, Instructors & Librarians).

Other organizational discussions centred on Job Action and Communications. The big question surrounding Job Action was about when we start preparing. It was thought that preparations should start earlier, so that we are prepared for all eventualities throughout the full process, rather than just at the end. The past chair of the Job Action Committee was directed to create a manual to be used as a guideline in preparations. A similar manual will be created by the Communications Officer, providing documents and protocols. While each process is fluid, with its own challenges and issues, the more ground work that is laid ahead of time, the more easily the work can be done when needed. This will focus energies and allow the process to run more smoothly.

Another issue that was discussed with respect to Communications was engagement with the membership both during and between bargaining. With all the means of

communication available, it is not always clear which are the best ways to reach and engage the membership. One idea was to have more frequent information sessions/discussion on individual topics. These could focus on one issue, and would both inform the membership and provide a place for feedback and an exchange of ideas. We will explore various options for improving regular communications and will be conducting a survey of members for advice on the best way to keep the lines of communication open both ways.

Beyond organization is the question of the bargaining mandate. We focused on three issues: salaries, benefits, and technology-assisted courses. It was determined that discussions with the Employer on all three of these topics need to be ongoing outside of bargaining. On salaries, it was determined that we need more data, so that we have numbers to support our arguments at the table. The commissioning of studies on salary anomalies and on salary equity will be referred to the Salary & Benefits Committee and the Women & Equity Committee respectively.

On benefits, there has been some movement. The Employer has raised the possibility of a Flexible Benefits plan that would be offered to all full-time employees on campus. The plan would offer the possibility of choosing from a new benefits package to suit individual needs. While UWFA is open to the possibility, it would only consider this if we maintain the right to bargain for further benefits at the table and if the plans require no contribution from the individual member. UWFA will explore this option in negotiation with other unions on campus. In addition, UWFA will explore the possibility of benefits for CAS members and retirees.

Last but certainly not least is the very thorny issue of Technology-Assisted Courses. One thing that has become clear is that nothing is clear on this matter. So the first task is to find out what is being done in different departments and faculties across the university. We identified a number of questions surrounding the use of these courses including, but not limited to, development costs, re-running courses, copyright and intellectual property, compensation, and department input into movement online. It was recommended that a labour Management Subcommittee be created to develop a strategy to address these issues. Stay tuned!

Upcoming Forum on Civil Speech and Academic Freedom

By Jason Hannan, Rhetoric, Writing, and Communications

On Friday, October 10, the Department of Rhetoric, Writing, and Communications will host the year's first installment of DIALOGUES, an interdisciplinary discussion series for University of Winnipeg faculty, staff, and students. This first installment will be entitled, "Civil Speech, Academic Freedom, and the Salaita Affair," and will feature two University of Winnipeg faculty members: Dr. Peter Ives from the Department of Politics and Dr. Andrew Park from the Department of Biology.

Dr. Ives and Dr. Park will address the highly controversial Salaita affair, one of the largest scandals to rock the academy in recent memory. Steven Salaita is a former professor of Indigenous Studies at Virginia Tech University. He is an accomplished scholar with several books and numerous articles in leading journals. He is also a highly respected teacher admired by his students for his dedication to teaching.

In October of 2013, Salaita was offered a faculty position at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. After accepting the offer, Salaita resigned from his position at Virginia Tech. His wife similarly quit her job in Virginia. They had both begun plans to move to Illinois.

However, just prior to their move this summer, Phyllis Wise, Chancellor of UI-UC, and Christophe Pierre, Vice President for Academic Affairs of the University of Illinois system, informed Salaita that his offer of appointment would not be moving forward to the Board of Trustees. They offered no explanation.

It was later revealed that Salaita had been the target of The Daily Caller, a conservative blog that heavily criticized the Palestinian professor for his angry and explicit tweets concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Chancellor Wise later confirmed that the decision to revoke the offer of appointment was indeed in response to Salaita's political comments on Twitter. As she put it in an open letter to the UI-UC community, "What we cannot and will not tolerate at the University of Illinois are personal and disrespectful words or actions that demean and abuse either viewpoints themselves or those who express them."

The decision by Wise and Pierre, and the subsequent justification of that decision, ignited a firestorm of criticism. Over three thousand faculty members from universities across the world signed a letter strongly denouncing the decision and vowing to boycott UI-UC for violating one of the most basic and sacrosanct principles of the university, namely, academic freedom. Countless commentators took issue with the very idea that civility should be prioritized over academic freedom. What exactly are the standards of civility, they asked, and who gets to decide what those standards are?

Many academics see the Salaita affair as only the most recent, egregious, and disturbing example of the conquest of the university by corporate values and interests. Several universities, for example, have already issued "guidelines" for faculty members using social media. This raises a number of serious questions. Should faculty members be restricted from expressing political opinions on social media, even if in a purely personal capacity? How, exactly, is it possible to "demean" a "viewpoint"? Is "civility" a tool for coercion and censorship? What are the implications of the Salaita affair and these larger trends in the academy for academic freedom?

On October 10th, Dr. Ives and Dr. Park will lead a discussion on these urgent questions. The event is open to the University of Winnipeg community. Everyone is welcome to participate and share their thoughts on the meaning, value, and future of academic freedom.

About the UWFA News

The UWFA News is compiled and published by the UWFA Communications Committee. The committee is chaired by Allison Surtees (Classics). For more information on the UWFA News, please contact Allison at a.surtees@uwinnipeg.ca.

The UWFA News accepts submissions from University of Winnipeg Faculty Association Members on issues of interest. Unless otherwise stated, the opinions expressed are those of the author(s) and not necessarily of the Association or its Executive Council.