

Dear Members,

As we head into summer it is worthwhile to reflect on where we stand as we anticipate the upcoming academic year. On Friday, June 26, the Collegiate ratified a new four year collective agreement. We are about to begin bargaining on behalf of Contract Academic Staff (CAS). In the spring of 2016, the Regular Academic Staff (RAS) collective agreement will be up for negotiation. In light of the recent update from the University President, the 2015-16 budget, and the in-progress University of Winnipeg Strategic Direction, it is useful to reflect on where we are and where we are going as UWFA.

With over 400 members and good fiscal stability, UWFA continues to be a strong association. We continue to advocate and to negotiate on behalf of our Members for fairness in the workplace. UWFA has great faith in our Members' abilities to steer the academic direction of the UW through participation in Senate and its sub-committees; we have therefore rarely waded into the academic governance of the institution. UWFA is committed to ensuring you are able to do such work in an environment where you are fairly compensated, with solid protections for academic freedom, and according to the hard won terms and conditions of employment in the collective agreements.

In my almost 10 years at UW, this is the first objectively "good news" budget I have seen. Our operating grant increased by 2.4 percent and the UW received a 1 million dollar deposit towards mitigating the funding inequity between UW and other Manitoba universities. President Trimbee is correct to point out that we, as a University, have "tightened our belt for years" saving "15 million [dollars] in annual expenses". We have also been informed that in the face of many retirements that the University will begin to re-staff those positions at great savings to the University. With the average retiring aged salary being worth more than double the salary of starting positions, the savings of this initiative are indeed significant.

In light of this budget, UWFA would have expected a stronger commitment to replenishing depleted departments, creating regular appointments where suites of courses are being taught repeatedly by CAS members, and minimizing its use of term appointments. Unfortunately, no such initiatives are mentioned in President Trimbee's update, but we remain hopeful that the upcoming year will still provide some satisfaction for our Members.

In our view, this would be an opportune moment for the Employer to address other financial issues that our members face, including our low salaries when compared on a national and provincial scale and our troubled pension situation. The update blames our continued fiscal hardships on a "\$2.5 million pension-related shortfall", a shortfall for which the Manitoba Court of Appeal held the UW responsible, and a matter that must be addressed in order to protect the long-term security of our Members.

The UWFA is pleased to see that the Employer has committed to re-staff two counselling positions that have gone unfilled for several years as well as the one that has been vacant for 6 months. Many of our Members reported frustrations in trying to get distressed

students the mental health support systems that they require. This commitment by the Employer is a welcome step in taking student mental health more seriously.

Now, it is also clear that the UW is well into setting its Strategic Direction - an initiative that purports to set the tone for our academic, research, and administrative directions. The Indigenous course requirement and the Indigenization of the University seem to be two important details of the academic direction of our institution. Our Members hold disparate views on these topics. These views are often contested and complex. We encourage our Members to vigorously discuss the Academic Direction of this institution. Together with our students, this is our university, and your voices are instrumental in setting the direction. Make sure you attend debates, show up at Senate and make your voices heard. Submit your feedback to [uwdirections15@uwinnipeg.ca](mailto:uwdirections15@uwinnipeg.ca) and make your opinions known. Since the University of Winnipeg has been a sight for nuanced, complete, and controversial discussions it is important allow opposing voices to be heard and considered. This is our university; a vigorous, civil and multivalent discussion of our futures should be harvested, cultivated and respected. Collectively, we have favoured contribution to debate rather than the stunting it. Let us recommit to open dialogues as we determine our shared academic future.

Over the last ten years we have often heard the phrase “vacancy management strategy”. It is a credit to our Members, that against all odds, many programs have survived, and in some cases, flourished, despite this strategy. Imagine how well served our student population would be, how further acclaimed our institution would be, if we endeavoured to fill faculty vacancies and provide optimal education to our students and research support to our disciplines.

While it is the Employer’s legislative prerogative to manage, UWFA believes we are an over managed institution. In order to realize higher dollar savings and to encourage our Members to continue to be active in the meaningful governance of the University, we collegially suggest that the Employer foster a “Management Vacancy Policy”. We cannot compel the Employer to manage efficiently but we can let our voices be heard on the issue. The price of a senior administrative position can be equivalent to 3-4 times the salary of a starting tenure track position. We must endeavour to bring balance back to the Administrator-Academic Staff ratios at our institution. We are a small liberal arts and sciences institution with boutique graduate offerings. We have a long history of self-governance and management. Our vision here is not unduly grand.

Perhaps naively, I still believe this is a time of optimism for UW. With higher operating budgets, and more provincial support, we can reconnect with the values that matter to our Members. We believe that our Members strive to teach, research, and govern the university in a manner that fosters accessibility for, and connectivity with, our students. We are committed to an interactive and academically rich environment that is deployed through small class sizes and innovative research. We are committed to a University that invests in human capital rather than one that invests in buildings that hold minimal classroom or research space. We have a small student body and a small Membership. Let us work together to reinvest in the values of the University of Winnipeg, and let us enter

the upcoming bargaining seasons resolved to provide President Trimbee with the evidence she needs to accept our case for reinvestment in that which makes University of Winnipeg a leader in liberal arts and sciences education.