

UWFA AGM Spring 2023, Apr. 12, 12:30PM, 3C01

President's Report

[Prior to my report, the membership continued its debate on the motion moved and seconded by Matthew Flisfeder and Jacqueline McLeod Rogers regarding the UWFA Council's endorsement of the CAUT position on the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism. The debate was, to my recollection, approximately 75 minutes long and included multiple speakers who addressed the membership multiple times, including the original mover. In the end, the membership voted against the motion by a strong majority, and therefore UWFA Council's endorsement of the CAUT position on the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism will remain. I thank members for engaging in vociferous, contentious, heated, but nonetheless respectful debate.]

Introductory words

Thank you everyone for coming; it's a pleasure to see you all and to welcome you to the UWFA's annual meeting. We last met in November virtually near the end of the term and now we've come to the end of the first mostly in-person Fall-Winter year since 2018-2019. It's also the first in-person meeting of the UWFA membership since Fall 2019. I'm aware that some members were disappointed and angry about the Council decision to hold this meeting in person, but I think there is value in being together as a membership. There's work to do for the next iteration of Council, I think, to determine how best to leverage remote meeting technology to add to our meetings without taking away from the valuable in-person experience; and, all of that to do with the constraints of using University of Winnipeg rooms and technology to hold meetings.

Once again, I want to applaud our members for making the University work through another challenging year. Needless to say the return to campus generated problems; the addition of COVID into the mix of illnesses that cause students to miss classes generated delays and more deferrals and absences. Regardless, from my vantage point, our members once again worked tirelessly to perform our research, teach our students, and to do all the service that makes the University function.

At the outset of the meeting, I want to thank Dr. Scott Forbes for his contributions to the Association. Scott has served as president of the Manitoba Organization of Faculty Associations since 2018 and, especially after the disastrous suggestion of a 30% cut to University budgets by the PC Govt in Spring 2020, Scott has led a transformation of MOFA into a keen and potent political advocacy group for high education in this province. He has worked tirelessly on our behalf to lobby gov't about higher education and to publicize the dire state of post-secondary funding in this province under the PC gov't. He's stepping down as MOFA President after 5 years, and I wanted to offer him thanks on behalf of the Association.

COVID-19 Pandemic

In November, the Council established a COVID-19 Committee with elected representatives from each bargaining unit as members, in addition to me and Lisa McGifford. I'd like to thank Kristen Hardy, Melanie Martin, and Karen Zoppa for their work on the committee. So far, we have met four times, including one meeting to set the terms of reference of the committee. We agreed to run a survey of the membership, which garnered a strong response: 302 members altogether responded (81 / approx. 180 CAS; 19 of approx. 35 Collegiate; 202 of approx. 365 RAS). We met at the end of March to discuss the survey and agreed to a) send a high-level summary to membership, b) to report to Council, c) to share results with the CAS and RAS Bargaining Teams. I was away and then swamped with end-of-term work and haven't got the high-level summary out to members yet, but I will do so before the end of next week.

Academic Labour Movement

Lisa and I will be attending CAUT next week. Since November, I met in ad hoc capacity with presidents of the other Manitoba FAs to discuss bargaining progress. We've been supporting the academic labour movement through our solidarity donation policy with donations to: Cape Breton, Memorial, Laval, PEI, CUPE 4600 (Carleton).

Labour Movement in Manitoba

Unfortunately, I missed the MFL Executive Council meeting in December, but I attended the March meeting, where there was much discussion about the provincial election.

Bargaining

I have a few small notes to mention re: bargaining.

CAS: We have begun meeting with the Employer regarding the CAS contract. We've had two meetings so far, and I have committed to keeping CAS members apprised of the state of bargaining via email. I've sent two bargaining update emails so far. As always, I encourage members to contact me if they would like more information. We will return to the table in mid-May and will continue to bargain over the summer; if we need to meet with members during the summer regarding bargaining, I will call a Zoom bargaining unit meeting. My thanks to members of the CAS Bargaining Team including Chief Negotiator Andrew Bendor-Samuel, and members NAME NAME, Kevin Friedman, and Lisa McGifford.

RAS: We are ready to come to the table in mid-May for RAS Bargaining. The team has been meeting regularly since January to work on language; two members have attended bargaining workshops and schools with CAUT and at Toronto Metropolitan University respectively. We intend to bargain over the summer and, as with CAS, to keep members apprised via email (I sent one update out already); if we need to meet with members during the summer regarding bargaining, I will call a Zoom bargaining unit meeting. My thanks to members of the CAS Bargaining Team including Chief Negotiator Janis Thiessen, and members Carlos Colorado, Stefan Dodds, and Lisa McGifford.

Administration at UofW

Since we met we have had a few roles filled at the upper administrative level. We have a Vice-President Finance and Administration, Navinder Basra. We met in March to get to know Mr. Basra, to explain UWFA's role on campus, and our high-level concerns. In January, Dr. Jan Stewart left the office of Provost and VP Academic and since then we have met regularly with interim Provost Jino Disastio. We have already indicated our desire to meet with Dr. Pavlia Radia as soon as she takes over as VPA and Provost in July.

I invite any questions about my report to the membership.

Submitted by: Dr. Peter J. Miller, President, UWFA