

UNBC-FA Newsletter

University of Northern BC Faculty Association

January 2008

FA Executive 2006-2007

President: **Darwyn Coxson**
Vice-President: **Saif Zahir**
Past President: **Chris Hawkins**
Secretary: **Antonia Mills**
Treasurer: **Balbinder Deo**
Members-at -Large: **Scott Emmons**
Vivian Fayowski
Joanne Matthews
Heather Myers
Blanca Schorcht
Grievance Officer: **Gordon Martel**
Executive Director: **Suzanne LeBlanc**
Admin. Assistant: **Helen Sideen**

**The Spring 2007
Annual General Meeting date is:
Wednesday March 7
12 noon to 1: 30 pm
6-205/211
Lunch is provided**

Hello Welcome back to the start of a new semester. This term will be an important one for the Faculty Association on several fronts.

Changes to the Association Constitution

Over the last three months the Association Executive has been reviewing the clauses in our constitution. We wanted to bring our constitution up to date with respect to changing legal requirements, both under the UNBC Faculty Agreement, and under other relevant provincial legislation (e.g. FOI/POP). We also wanted to insure that our constitution reflects the changing nature of demands placed upon the Association. Some of these demands, such as the need for safeguards on the use of grievance and arbitration funds, were the focus of discussions at our last annual general meeting. We will be sending to you next week a copy of the proposed changes to the Association constitution and a ratification ballot for these changes. A series of information meetings on the proposed changes will be announced by email next week. We urge you to review this material carefully.

Merit and Evaluation.

The new faculty agreement put in place significant changes in the merit and evaluation process at UNBC. Most of these changes will take place a year from now and are tied to the outcome of current negotiations on evaluation language (these were deferred from the main table negotiations last year). The working group which is meeting this term to draft new language on evaluations consists of Karen Beeler, Darwyn Coxson, Gail Fondahl, and Howard Brunt. We would each welcome your feedback on this topic. The recommendations from this group must be ratified by Association members before they can take effect.

In the meantime association members will be judged for merit and evaluation consideration based on the same criteria as last year. The working guidelines that Chairs develop as they meet within each College should therefore not change

significantly. The current agreement does specify fewer merit awards, each of greater value. However, it also says that when more individuals are meritorious than there are awards available, funds will be distributed on a pro-rated basis between eligible members. Basically, the advice of the Association is that the two processes (deciding merit and awarding funds) should be kept separate. The CEC should decide which faculty are meritorious. The relevant provisions of the agreement about awarding funds can then be applied. More information on this topic is provided below.

University Budget. As you are aware from the town hall meetings in December the University faces a potentially significant budgetary shortfall over the next several years. This will require difficult choices across our institution. The Association has several roles to play in this process.

First and foremost, the Association wants to insure that any changes that are implemented at UNBC reflect existing commitments that have been made to members under the UNBC Faculty Agreement. The University in their public statements to-date have indicated that they do not want to trigger Financial Exigency or Program Redundancy clauses of the faculty agreement. This means that Association members holding continuing appointments (eg. tenure track or tenured faculty or continuing SLI or librarian positions) will continue to hold those positions, subject to normal review processes.

This, however, does not preclude changes to the administrative units in which members are based. Amalgamation of administrative programs does not constitute program redundancy under the Faculty Agreement. Program redundancy is a quite specific process which can lead ultimately to the dismissal of tenured faculty. Program amalgamation, on the other hand, protects your appointment type or rank, though it may bring about many other changes in your workplace environment. Having said that, our disciplinary identity and external recognition are closely associated with our administrative designations, so any changes in this regard should be well justified. Furthermore, there should be a clear demonstration that changes to administrative structures result in cost savings, if that is the primary rationale for implementing these changes. The University has indicated that they will be developing targeted buyouts of faculty positions. The Faculty Association will review these plans under the existing practices article of the Faculty Agreement.

Association members holding term positions face a more uncertain outlook under the University planning process. Yes, the University can achieve short-term budget savings by not renewing term appointments. However, term appointments provide a very cost effective means of meeting teaching demands (some would say too cost effective) and are typically used to fill gaps in the existing faculty complement. The Association will work closely with members holding term appointments to insure that their specific circumstances are recognized.

Closely related is the subject of workload. Association members have consistently identified workload as one of their major concerns at UNBC. The Faculty Association wants to insure that

changes arising out of the budgetary planning process do not have a major impact on workload. We should remember, however, that over the longer term programs do have considerable control over workload demands. Faculty will want to look closely at how their degree programs are structured. Should more of our senior level courses be offered, for instance, on an alternate year basis? Will some degree programs be eliminated? Although these decisions fall under the jurisdiction of Senate, they are driven by requests from the programs, and have major implications for workload.

The Association also wants to insure that stated components of the UNBC budget shortfall attributed to our membership are accurate and reflect our understanding of what was negotiated last year under the new Faculty Agreement. We will review the costs of funding progression through the ranks (the cost of your annual career development increments, merit and/or promotion). We have asked for access to the detailed budget planning documents and will be contacting individual association members for additional expertise as required to evaluate these documents.

Election of a New Association Executive.

The Association Executive is elected for a two-year term. That period will end this June and the Association will be holding elections this March for the new executive. We would urge you to consider letting your name stand for election to the Association Executive. The Association functions best when we have diverse representation from across the institution. We will update you on this issue in February as we draw nearer to our election.

Long-Term Issues

Finally, and perhaps most importantly the Association Executive needs your ongoing feedback and support. It is all too easy for us to fall into a reactive mode, responding only to the near term demands. No doubt there will be many of these, but please let us know what you feel should be the long-term issues being considered by the Association Executive.

Sincerely, Darwyn Coxson
UNBC-FA President

Call for Nominations

The purpose of the CUFA/BC *Distinguished Academics Awards* is to recognise academic staff members of British Columbia public universities who have made outstanding contributions to the community beyond the academy through their academic work.

There are two awards: **Academic of the Year Award** and **Career Achievement Award**. Both recognize faculty members who have distinguished themselves over their career or within the last three years.

For more information and nomination forms visit the CUFA/BC website www.cufa.bc.ca (look under awards). The FA office also has copies of the material available (fac-assoc@unbc.ca or 5816). Nominations must be received by February 5, 2007. Nominations made for the 2006 awards may be resubmitted

Since the last Faculty Agreement was ratified there have been several Memoranda of Understanding signed between the Association and University that provide clarification on the implementation of previously agreed upon language. The full text of these MOU's can be seen at:

http://www.unbc.ca/policy/category/human_resources.html

Agreement 101: A summary of the new evaluation process Article 25.

The evaluation process has been modified. One change is that evaluations will move from annual evaluations to biennial (every two years). There will be a transition year, in 2007 for the 2006 performance year where all members are evaluated as in past years. Beginning in 2008, for the performance year 2007, only CSAM will be evaluated. Given the transition year, this evaluation will be only for the previous year. CASHS members will be evaluated in 2009 for the two previous years (2007 and 2008). All further years, the rotation continues and will be evaluated two years of annual reviews. Librarians will follow CASHS timetable and SLIs will follow the CSAM timetable.

This biennial system covers all continuing and tenured members. Continuing and tenured members will still be required to submit an updated CV to their Chair or supervisor on the year they are not formally evaluated.

The review process remains unchanged.

By the second Friday in February of the year of review members will submit a Performance Evaluation report (PER). Details of what should be included in the PER is found in Article 21.2 for faculty members and regular term members; 21.3.3 for regional chairs; 21.4 for librarians; 21.5 for SLIs; 21.6 for term instructors; and 21.7.1 for program chairs.

By March 15th members will meet with their chair or supervisor. By that date, Chairs or supervisors will have written a draft memorandum of evaluation.

The member will meet with the Chair or supervisor to review the previous year's performance in their key areas of activities. In this meeting expected outcomes for the coming year will be discussed.

Following this meeting, the Chair or supervisor will modify the memorandum reflecting the discussion with the member at the meeting. The memorandum will be sent to the member no later than April 30th.

The member is expected to sign the Memorandum to indicate he/she has read the evaluation. Signing does not indicate endorsement of the memorandum. A rebuttal letter can be submitted if the member wishes and both documents will be sent to the CEC. Both the Memorandum and the rebuttal letters are to be signed by the Chair or supervisor and the Member. Article 21.1.5.2 outlines what the memorandum of evaluation shall include.

Members holding tenure-track, term, and probationary shall file annual reports to their Chair or supervisor. These reports are due the second week in February. They must meet with their Chair or supervisor by March 15 and following the meeting both the Chair or supervisor and the member prepare a brief memorandum reviewing the meeting. These are due by April 30th.

Call for Volunteers

Please consider putting your name forward to volunteer on a Selections Committee. This is a constitution-based committee responsible for encouraging members to run for upcoming executive positions.

FA OFFICE HOURS: The FA office is in Rm. 3085 Admin Bldg. Core office hours are 11:00 am – 1:00 pm. Contact Suzanne or Helen at local 5816 or via e-mail at: fac-assoc@unbc.ca if you wish to arrange a meeting at a more convenient time.