

UNBC-FA Newsletter

University of Northern BC Faculty Association

November 2010

FA Executive 2010-2011

Acting President: **Ken Prkachin**
Vice-President: **Lee Keener**
Past President(s): **Darwyn Coxson**
Jacqueline Holler
(currently on sabbatical leave)
Secretary: **Julie Orlando**
Treasurer: **Jalil Safaei**
Members-at -Large: **Gail Curry**
Erik Jensen
Alex Lautensach
Jennifer Hyndman
Karima Fredj
Grievance Officer: **Kerry Reimer**
Acting Executive Director: **Gwen Lew**
Admin. Assistant: **Helen Sideen**

The Fall Annual General Meeting date is:

Tuesday, November 30, 2010

11:30 noon to 1: 00 pm

Room: Canfor Lecture Theatre

Lunch is provided

A MESSAGE FROM THE FA PRESIDENT:

K. Prkachin

I am hopeful that this will be my last Newsletter message as Acting President as I look forward to the beginning of a sabbatical in January. As you probably know from earlier communications, the membership has elected Lee Keener as Vice President. Upon the ending of my duties, Lee will fulfill the remainder of my term as Acting President. I have known and worked closely with Lee for many years and have absolute confidence that the work of the Association will be in good hands. I am pleased that so many people offered their names for election to this position—it speaks well to the importance that members place in the work of the Association and their willingness to pitch in to advance our collective good. As you will also know from a previous announcement, the Association's negotiating team reached agreement on the terms of a new Faculty Agreement with the University Administration late November. Elsewhere in this Newsletter, Chief Negotiator Darwyn Coxson provides a review of the major elements of change in the new agreement. We learned Tuesday, November 16 that the Public Sector Employers Council (PSEC), the Provincial body that sets the terms for agreements in the post-secondary sector had approved the final form of the Agreement. University Administration informed us that they will be taking the Agreement forward for ratification by the Board of Governors at their next meeting. On Monday, November 22, the Executive received a report from Darwyn, one of many that had been provided over the course of the negotiations. The Executive voted to recommend the new agreement for ratification by the membership. A series of information sessions will be scheduled over the next couple of weeks for reporting out by the Negotiating Committee and a ratification ballot will be organized as quickly as possible. The text of the new agreement will be made available on the Association website: www.unbcfa.ca. Please refer to Darwyn's report for the key provisions

and changes to the agreement. I strongly encourage you to attend one of the information sessions.

I would like to say a few words to describe the process from my perspective and to thank the members of the Negotiating Committee. The process to establish a new agreement began with the formulation of the committee some 18 months ago. The original committee consisted of Darwyn Coxson, David Casperson, Scott Emmons and Suzanne LeBlanc. Suzanne was replaced by Gwen Lew when Suzanne began her leave, but she continued to be available for consultation on an as needed basis. The Negotiating Committee engaged, in my view, in an exemplary consultation process, holding repeated meetings with all sectors of our bargaining unit and working with those groups to identify and clarify key issues and develop draft language. Many hours went into these meetings and the follow-up and integration needed to develop positions. The team also met regularly with the Executive and consulted with the other organizations with which we are affiliated; in particular, CUFA-BC and CAUT.

This time around, head-to-head bargaining was a very protracted process, beginning in May, continuing through the summer and then resuming, after an early Autumn hiatus, at the end of October. Bargaining was constrained by the very strict PSEC mandate to hold the line on salary items, with the directive that any changes must be cost-neutral.

Our team was also faced with a further hurdle—the general understanding that in the previous agreement the Association gave up much and we needed to find a way to correct that. I believe that the team has managed to achieve a course correction in many important areas while also achieving what was possible financially. Two weeks ago, I was virtually certain we were going to have to go to arbitration for the first time, but we managed to avoid that.

Establishing an effective Faculty Agreement is a work-in-progress. We have made positive strides in this Agreement, but we will need to be equally committed and effective in the next round of negotiations, which are most likely 18 months away. While expressing my deep appreciation to this year's Negotiating Team for their tireless and effective work, I would like to put in my request for interested members to consider becoming involved themselves in negotiations during the next round.

VACANCY ON THE EXECUTIVE:

The Faculty Association would like to welcome Lee Keener into the position of Vice President.

OTHER CHANGES TO THE FA OFFICE:

As of October 12, 2010, Gwen Lew has been hired as the Acting Executive Director. She will be covering Suzanne LeBlanc while she is on a leave of absence for a period of up to one year.

NEGOTIATIONS UPDATE- A NOTE FROM DARWYN COXSON, CHIEF NEGOTIATOR

Bargaining Report

The UNBC Faculty Association and Administration bargaining teams reached agreement in principle November 12th on a proposed new 2-year Faculty Agreement, for the period July 1st 2010 to June 30th 2012. The Faculty Association and University were constrained in this bargaining

round by a PSEC mandate that dictated that any changes to the Faculty Agreement be cost neutral to the University. As expected there will be no across-the-board salary increases, changes to CDI, or changes to SCH contract rates. However, we have added a contract re-opener on compensation issues. The contract re-opener states that if there are changes to the PSEC mandate for the public sector, the Association can ask that negotiations be reopened on compensation issues.

In this bargaining environment of no new available funds, a critical issue for the Faculty Association Executive and bargaining team was to identify areas where we could obtain cost savings. Unfortunately, the cost savings obtained from our discontinuing the old merit system will not be realized during the two years of the new agreement. What has been proposed instead is to reallocate funds that were previously distributed to programs under the “teaching workload” adjustment fund. These funds will be discontinued in the new agreement and are reallocated to meet the following needs:

- 1) First time sabbaticals for newly tenured faculty will now be funded at 90% (from July 1, 2010).
- 2) We have supplemented the funds available for SLI leaves.
- 3) Funds are allocated to a set of new Excellence Awards.
- 4) We have started to address issues of Full Professor Salary Compression.

Other benefits in the Agreement remain unchanged, including the post-retirement benefits and medical services travel benefits. Numerous other changes were made to the Faculty Agreement. These include:

Merit Awards: The 2010 CSAM merit awards will be paid on ratification of the agreement. We have agreed to phase out the current merit award system, which will be run for one last time in 2011 for the College of Arts, Social and Health Sciences (insuring equity between total funds awarded to the two Colleges). Funding the payout of remaining merit awards was the single largest funding commitment made at the bargaining table, representing just under 40% of available funds. Starting in 2012 the University will introduce an expanded excellence awards system, with four \$3000 awards available in each of the areas of teaching, scholarship, service, and professional practice. These awards will be open to all FA Members, including term members. A working group will be struck in 2011 to revise the awards criteria and applications process for both new and existing awards.

Sabbatical Leaves: The first leave taken by newly tenured faculty will now be funded at 90% of salary, up from the current 80%. Faculty members currently on their first sabbatical will receive a retroactive lump-sum salary adjustment. This was the second largest reallocation of available funds made at the bargaining table, representing over 25% of available funds. Additionally, any Faculty member that wants to defer taking their sabbatical leave for a year for academic reasons may ask that the deferral time be credited towards their next sabbatical leave.

SLI Leaves: Unlike faculty, SLI sabbatical leaves (called professional leaves) are contingent upon the availability of funds. Setting a structure in place that would allow SLI's to access leaves was a high priority, given the rapid growth in Association SLI membership. Our allocation of SLI leave funds was the third largest commitment at the table, at just over 17% of available funds.

Evaluations and Post-Tenure Review: Evaluations of tenured and continuing Members will continue to occur every second year, however, with the phasing out of the current merit process, both Colleges will now evaluate their tenured and continuing Members in the same year, starting in 2011. Evaluations of members will now require only a satisfactory or unsatisfactory ranking; reducing the workload of Chairs and eliminating disputes that arose from comparisons inherent to the previous ranking system. Peer review committee oversight of evaluations will be limited to cases where an unsatisfactory evaluation has been made. The post-tenure review process is no longer triggered by a single unsatisfactory recommendation. It will now require two consecutive unsatisfactory evaluations to trigger the post-tenure review process. When the post-tenure review process is triggered, the Performance Review Committee no longer makes a recommendation for dismissal. Rather, it simply reports to the University President on the Members progress during the committee's term. The President can then take any of

the actions he/she could always have taken under the disciplinary article, from doing nothing all the way up to “dismissal for cause”. The term “dismissal for cause” clause is better defined in case law, providing a much fairer process for any member facing this sanction.

Librarian Duties. We have adopted into the agreement clearer language defining the duties of professional librarians at UNBC, based on extensive feedback from the librarian members.

Term Appointments: We have clarified the right of term members to ask for 12 month appointments (versus the current practice of giving many members 8 month pro-rated positions) when they meet with Chairs to discuss their terms and conditions of employment. We have further removed the stipulation in new contracts that many members found quite objectionable, where any change to the contract was deemed to be a waiver of the right of first refusal. As noted above, terms members can now participate fully in the excellence awards.

Workload: Current language requiring assessment of other factors when assigning teaching (e.g. size of classes, type of teaching, concurrent research and service obligations, etc.) has been strengthened. Changes to the evaluation and merit process that take effect in 2013 will reduce the workload of Chairs.

Salary Compression: The last several Faculty Agreements have each seen major increases in the salary floors for new hires or for faculty newly promoted into the next professorial rank. Over time this has had the impact of leveling out the salary profile, resulting in long serving members within each rank having salaries that are only slightly higher than newly appointed members. Although faculty at the Assistant and Associate Professor rank have the ability to eventually move to the new higher salary structure (on promotion), long serving full Professors have had no ability to move to another rank and thus will never obtain the increased salary floors.

In the new Faculty Agreement the parties have agreed to implement part of the 2008 salary compression report (see http://unbcfa.ca/pdf/Salary_Compression_Working_Group_Final_Report.pdf), providing limited salary adjustments for Full Professors (approximately 5% of available funds). These funds are being paid as stipends, as PSEC at the present time will not allow base salary adjustments. This fund has been called the “Full Professor Scholarship Productivity Plan”, again to meet PSEC requirements; however its implementation follows the 2008 salary compression report.

