

UNBC-FA Newsletter

University of Northern BC Faculty Association *Fall 2007*

FA Executive 2006-2007

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Admin. Assistant: ***Helen Sideen***

**The Fall 2007
Annual General Meeting date is:
Wednesday November 7, 2007
12 noon to 1: 30 pm
7-752 (Bentley Centre)
Lunch is provided**

President's Message

The fall term continues to be an active one for the Faculty Association as we follow-up on initiatives that were started by the University over the last year in response to the projected budget deficit at UNBC.

Although much of the attention this year has been focused on the buyout and early retirement package, we have also seen evidence of budgetary pressures in the nature and type of appointments that are being offered to members. This is particularly true for members holding term professorial appointments, where most appointments are now offered to members as 10 month term contracts, even where there is an expectation of continuing employment in the next academic year. This is a major change from previous years, where most term professorial appointments were 12 month contracts. In some cases this new practice has led to the loss of pension and other benefits. It also ignores the continued professional development (and in many cases research) carried out by members in their non-teaching term. The Association is currently seeking provisions from the Joint Committee for the Administration of the Agreement (JCAA) that would allow members to spread their 10 month term salary over a 12 month period (addressing benefits and pension continuity). However, a more lasting solution, of requiring continuing members to be offered a 12 month contract, will have to wait until the next contract talks in 2010. Unfortunately, provisions that we had in place under prior Faculty Agreements providing this protection were lost in the last contract negotiation round.

Another major question faced by the Association right now is: "What process will the University follow in cases where they want to change the size/structure of administrative programs?". Although the Faculty Agreement is silent on the placement of members in administrative units, the agreement does speak to the need for an open and transparent consultation process on any changes in the workplace environment of FA

members. Given the close linkages between academic and administrative programs at UNBC we would argue that the UNBC Senate may provide the best forum for consideration of changes to administrative structures. We would urge members and/or programs that have ideas on restructuring of administrative units to submit these proposals to the Academic Visioning Initiative (AVI), a Senate mandated process.

The Association has also continued negotiations on issues that were mandated by the last Faculty Agreement (Article 74). At the present time this primarily involves the development of new criteria for what constitutes unsatisfactory, satisfactory, and meritorious performance. Negotiations on these criteria are presently being conducted by the JCAA. Any provisions that are agreed upon in these negotiations will be placed before members in a ratification ballot.

Agreement 101: Article 30 Teaching Workload

This Article spells out the process by which teaching workloads are determined and assigned to members. Given that teaching is a large portion of members' workload, understanding this particular Article is important.

There is a specific timeline to be followed in determining workload:

1. By November 1st of each academic year the Chair in consultation with the members of their programs will submit a teaching workload and schedule to the Dean for approval. (This deadline suggests that the consultation should occur by October at the latest).
2. At this point, it is forwarded to the Dean for approval. This normally occurs by November 30th. At that time, the Chair will inform members of their teaching assignments for the upcoming year in writing.
3. Within 10 days of notification the member may request reconsideration of the assignment by the Dean.
4. After consulting with the Chair, the Dean will make a final decision in writing within a further 10 days.

If changes to the workload must be made following this process, they should normally be made at least 2 months before they take into effect. Such changes must always involve consultation with the member. After July 1st, any changes shall take place only when "a significant change in circumstances occurs" and again, this is only after consultation with the member occurs.

By January 15th the Dean of each College will send to the member a list of all teaching members workloads.

How is workload determined? The teaching workload is based on total contact hours of courses taught (Semester Contact Hours). Each hour is one scheduled by the Registrar and can include direct reading or study courses if approved by the Dean. Normally it involves time spent in instruction (see 30.2.1 for details).

Normally a workload of 15 SCH (5 3SCH courses) will be assigned. There are many considerations to be taken into consideration in this 'normal' load. These include informal teaching (defined in 30.2.3); the number of

students in the class; the level of the class; additional preparation time; number of separate classes taught; the amount of research thesis, or other academic supervision; laboratory and tutorial responsibilities; location of course; and productivity. A non-exhaustive list of relevant factors is found in 30.3.2. These can be used to adjust the workload up or down.

Further, the Chair and Dean may make adjustments in light of a members' annual teaching load pattern over a three year period (30.3.3). A particularly heavy load over a given period can be a factor in adjusting a given workload

Intellectual Property

We now have the results of the Intellectual Property Article ratification. We are pleased to report that 92% of ballots cast were in favour of the Article. The Article maintains ownership of IP with the member (a key factor for us) and defines in greater details how researchers can ensure fair acknowledgment of contribution for academic work.

Survey on unprofessional behaviour at work

The Faculty Association is committed to creating a work environment that is healthy for all members. Organizational changes like what we have experienced in the last year are very stressful and create the potential for the growth of unprofessional behaviour.

With this in mind, Suzanne LeBlanc, our Executive Director and an MBA student, will soon be sending out a survey asking you about your experiences with unprofessional behaviours such as incivility, bullying, manipulation, and disrespectful behaviours.'

A second goal is to ascertain how well the policies and programs available to members under these conditions are communicated to you and how effective you feel they are in addressing your concerns regarding such behaviours.

The data will be used to help in making recommendations on how to 'best practices' in other institutions to make your work environment as safe and civil as possible.

The Role of Senate

Given the central role of the Senate in addressing many of the changes that are currently happening at UNBC we have included below an article from Rob Clift, the Executive Director of the Confederation of University Faculty Associations of BC

Senate – The Soul of the University

By Robert Clift, Executive Director, CUFA/BC

In 1963, University of California President Clark Kerr coined the term "multiversity" to describe an institution that was no longer an ivory tower, but an integral part of the economic, political and cultural life of the society it served. Where liberal education and pure research characterized the university ideal prior to World War II, government, industry and public expectations became much more utilitarian after the War. In the intervening four decades since Kerr's summation of the modern university, it has become far more responsive to its society than perhaps even he ever imagined possible.

So, the criticism that the university has lost, or even sold, its soul to interests outside the groves of Academe should come as no surprise.

Thankfully, the soul of the university is not lost. Though perhaps a bit tattered, it can be found in the academic senate.

In the senate we find the embodiment of those pre-War ideals. It is wholly concerned with the academic quality

of the institution, unfettered by outside interests.

Development of proposals in committees and debate in the senate provide rigor comparable to the defense of a doctoral dissertation. At least, it should. The role of the academic senate is in jeopardy from administrators eager to respond to outside interests, and from faculty members who are indifferent, or worse, antagonistic towards its role as conservator of university ideals.

Our colleagues in administrative roles can be forgiven somewhat for their impatience with senate. Wedged between the demands of government, students, faculty, industry, alumni and donors, anything that gets in the way of their solving problems and moving on to their next task is an irritant. But it's precisely because administrators are focused on immediate problems that the senate must exist. Someone needs to take a second look at major decisions to evaluate their long-term effect on the academic quality of the university. Even the best administrators can't know all the potential consequences of their actions.

As for criticisms from faculty members that senate is sometimes an impediment to new ideas, this can't be denied. Senates are, by design, conservative institutions. Even though the intention is for senates to conserve core values of academic freedom and intellectual rigor, historically they have conserved other values that have outlived their usefulness. But this is the nature of democracy. We accept the conservative tendencies of our fellow citizens in exchange for protections against demagoguery.

This was well recognized by Sir James Duff and Robert Berdahl in their landmark 1966 report on academic governance in Canada, which is the cornerstone for the bicameral governance structure we enjoy today. By vesting the authority over academic matters in the hands of the senate, Duff and Berdahl explicitly provided a counterbalance to the tendencies towards expediency of academic administrators and boards of governors.

Unfortunately, the increased demands on faculty members in the forty years since Duff-Berdahl means they have less time to fulfill their roles in the democratic governance of the university. Consequently, more and more authority over academic matters is being ceded to administrators by default. This has to stop, and stop now.

Any faculty member who cherishes their academic freedom and the need for high-quality instruction and research has to play their role in supporting the work of the academic senate. Like any other democracy, the university is ever changing. If the constituents of this democracy are not vigilant, the sum of seemingly small changes may have catastrophic consequences for the values they hold dear.

What can an individual faculty member do to preserve the soul of the university? Keep your senators apprised of troubling academic developments in your department and faculty; comment on a senate report; make a proposal to a senate committee; join a senate committee; run for a position on senate. Anything that keeps the spirit and function of senate alive nourishes our collective soul.

To quote Greek philosopher Aristotle (384 BC – 322 BC): "If liberty and equality, as is thought by some are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be best attained when all persons alike share in the government to the utmost."

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.