

Minutes of the SFUFA Executive Meeting
Held February 11, 2021
Via zoom video conference
9.30 – 12 noon

In attendance:

Kumari Beck (Education)
Sherryl Bisgrove (Biological Sciences)
Dave Hannah (Business)
Dai Heide (Philosophy)
Dan Laitsch (Education)
Janice Regan (Computing Science)
Michael Sjoerdsma (Engineering Science) Chair
Alexandra Wieland (Archives)

Brian Green (Executive Director)
Melanie Lam (Minutes)
Jennifer Scott (Member Services)

Regrets:

Steeve Mongrain (Economics)
Suzanne Norman (Publishing)

The meeting was called to order at 9.34 am.

1. Approval of Agenda

Add TA rankings discussion under *Other Business* and faculty audits project under agenda item #8.

Moved: Kumari Beck/Dai Heide

Carried.

2. Approval of Minutes of January 14th

Approved as circulated.

Moved: Dave Hannah/Janice Regan

Carried.

3. Business arising

- i. The selection process for TA's in some Departments appears to be problematic. It has been brought to SFUFAs attention that in some departments, Instructors are being asked to rank all applicants, whether they are qualified or not, which means that most often Instructors end up with candidates who are not ideal for the job, especially for undergrad courses. There appears to be no mechanism in place that gives the Instructor the option to eliminate those who are not qualified. In some cases, there could be up to 30 – 40 applicants to be ranked. After some discussion, the SFUFA executive noted that

Instructors should be given some control over the selection process and should not be forced to rank those who are not qualified, and this seems to be the practice in most Departments. The executive noted that having good communication between the Department Manager and Instructor and explicitly laying out the required and preferred qualifications in the job posting are a couple of ways in which the applicant pool can be narrowed down.

4. Presidents Report – Mike Sjoerdsma

- New VPPI position: Mike recapped the recent meeting with Joy Johnston and noted SFUFA will campaign for a candidate with strong academic leadership qualities, with a strong focus on EDI, with at least a PhD, and a strong connection to the VP Academic Office. The Administration has committed to a robust consultation process. Mike noted that SFUFA will be sending a letter to the search committee shortly.
- The University’s default zoom settings doesn’t allow for people to self-select the names by which they are identified on Zoom. The recommendation was to raise this issue at the next consult item.

5. Member Services report

Jen gave a report on her advocacy cases.

6. Executive Director report

- Faculty Relations has announced that a final version of the Collective Agreement will be available soon for members.
- Discussion on Donations policy and Faculty audits – see agenda item #8.

7. Report by SFUFA Academic Integrity Committee – Eric Gedajlovic

- The committee surveyed and studied the policies and procedures of 32 universities listed in the McLeans rankings. Some have a decentralized approach to Academic Integrity (AI), where the Instructor runs the entire process in the undergraduate world. At a majority of other universities, the Instructor collects information and evidence of AI cases and refers them to their Dean/Department Head, or to a central University committee for review.
- At SFU, AI cases are handled at the Instructor level; Instructors have the authority to give students a warning, or a “F” grade. At UOA, Instructors can bring forward suspicions to the Administration but cannot hand out sanctions. In 75% of the universities surveyed, Instructors are not allowed to assign penalties. At Waterloo, Instructors may refer to the Dean or engage in informal processes with student. Any informal resolution must be

approved by the Dean. At McMaster, if the Instructor believes the matter is serious, they may refer it to the Dean. At UBC an Instructor may reassess the grade after investigation and the Dean may assign the penalty.

- Only SFU, Queens, UPEI give Instructors the exclusive responsibility to assign preliminary penalties. In 63% of the universities surveyed, Deans, Associate Deans and Department Heads adjudicate AI sanctions.
- Some of the costs of having Instructors as Adjudicators are: It is structurally unfair to students as the complainant is the investigator and adjudicator, it may lead to inconsistent outcomes, it can potentially damage the student-instructor relationship, excessive workload can prevent Instructors from attending to and supporting the needs of students. Benefits are: Cases can be settled informally, students may feel more comfortable dealing with their Instructor, it is less costly, Instructors may know students better and be better able to assess intent.
- Guiding Principles of an effective AI process: 1) Provide a fair process for accused student, 2) Lead to consistent decisions across Faculties, 3) allows Instructors to focus on their teaching and preserve a positive relationship with their students, rather than becoming disciplinarians.
- Does SFU's policies and procedures provide a fair process? The answer is no. Do they produce consistent decisions across Faculties and the University? The answer is no, because similar cases are handled differently across Instructors. Can they damage the relationship between Instructor and student? The answer is yes. Does the extreme workload damage the ability of the Instructor to focus on learning and supporting students? The answer is yes.
- The current system fails both Instructors and students. Lots of burnout and anxiety are experienced on both sides.
- SFUFA points: Some Instructors may not like the idea of referring the case automatically to another committee, the committee can then override the Instructors penalty and SCODA can as well; would rather look into ways in which cheating can be reduced; Administrators need to think about doing the right thing for students (duty of care); there needs to be more education for students on AI.
- Thanks to the committee for their important research and informative presentation. The SFUFA executive will be engaging in further discussions on this topic.

8. a) On motion of Kumari Beck/Janice Regan, the board went into an In-camera board only discussion at 10:55 am and ended at 11: 07 am. Moved: Kumari Beck/Dan Laitsch.

b) Donations policy:

At the last meeting, the executive recommended that SFUFA draft a donations policy and a copy was circulated with today's meeting package. After discussion, some suggestions are to highlight the member benefits and to allocate a separate pot for other faculty association requests. Brian noted he would circulate the revised document shortly.

c) Faculty audits project

- A draft document was circulated and a recommendation is being made for SFUFA to undertake this project to examine how each Faculty at SFU is being managed, by looking at their budgets, year-end reconciliations, staffing reports, investments in communications and PR, investment in fundraising, centralization of endowments, investments in the core academic mission of teaching and research etc.
- It was noted that a FOI request has been submitted for some preliminary documents. The plan does include interviews with as many Chairs and Directors as possible.
- SFUFA is recommending that one person receive a teaching release to undertake the project, such as SFUFA's chief negotiator, along with another volunteer from the SFUFA executive, or to hire a research associate to undertake this work.
- The executive committee agreed this was a good idea and will vote on it once more details about the scope of the project is made available.

9. Center for Accessible Learning (CAL) discussion

SFUFA has received complaints that CAL is no longer consistently taking on the work to recommend reasonable academic accommodations for students', and this is creating an increase in workload for faculty members – mostly to do with the invigilation of exams. In some classes where there are 200 students, there can be up to 6-12 accommodation requests and each can take from 15-20 minutes to set up. In addition, accommodations are being requested for quizzes now as well, not just for mid-term exams. In other instances where quizzes are given before tutorials, CAL used to set up the timing of the exam with the students, but it now appears that the Instructor is having to do this. Some departments have been told that they have to do their own exam invigilation without any extra resources being available and this results in a huge workload issue for the Instructor. This seems to have intensified since Covid-19 and SFUFA is unsure if CAL's policies have changed. After some discussion it was recommended that SFUFA seek clarification about this from the Administration at the next consult meeting.

10. Items for Consultation – February 18th

- I. CAL and workload - The Centre for Accessible Learning has developed new protocols for accommodation of students. We take no issue with the need for accommodation or the reasons additional steps might be taken in the COVID environment. We have, however, heard from numerous members in a range of Departments and Faculties about the additional demands being placed upon faculty members, and the serious workload implications of these. SFUFA would like to discuss the new protocols, and to speak specifically about what resources can be made available so that faculty are not asked to assume hours of additional work when that work (for invigilation, for example) can and should be managed by CAL.
- II. Privacy and COVID cases - SFUFA would like to discuss protocols for handling COVID exposures in classrooms and what appear to us to be inconsistencies in the messaging to faculty. We have two main concerns: 1) that there be institutional clarity so all faculty understand what they ought and ought not do in the event of an exposure; and 2), that we identify how the balance is struck between protection of privacy and responsibility for student safety and students' ability to provide informed consent to class participation.
- III. Zoom and name selection - The University's default Zoom settings make it difficult for people to self-select the names by which they are identified on Zoom. This seems a relatively easy matter to address, and yet requests of faculty to IT have not been satisfactorily answered.

11. Other Business – none to report.

Adjournment. There was no other business and the meeting was adjourned at 12.05 pm.