

SFUFA takes equity seriously. We strive to help build a University in which not only are structural barriers removed, but proactive work is undertaken to make a community that is open to and inclusive of all, not only in principle but in practice. We believe that structural inequity is real, and that the work of dismantling long-standing institutions and practices of oppression is the work of us all.

There is a long history of SFU's faculty, staff and students working to advance equity in our community - a national court challenge of the gender biases in the CRC program; active and ongoing anti-racism work; positive space campaigns; movements against sexual violence and assault; salary equity initiatives; and actions in support of living wages and fair trade, to name only a few.

Some progress has been made on specific issues, but despite the ongoing efforts of community members, we continue to see a pattern of institutional resistance to changing many practices that embed *inequity* in our governance and employment structures. What is more, initiatives that are undertaken too often focus on the wrong targets, emphasizing quick, symbolic gestures that may not always align with some of the core foundations of the university system. Meaningful work towards equity must not come at the expense of academic freedom, collegial governance, transparency, or the rights of long-term employees. Rather, these pillars of the academic system are essential to the dismantling of structural privilege and the expansion of individual and collective rights. What equity work must address is the real, lived experience of community members.

SFUFA has assisted over 220 faculty members with individual cases since the start of 2020. Of those, fully 75% involve faculty members who are defined by law as members of equity-seeking groups. Over 30% of all female faculty and 50% of all Indigenous faculty have had cause to seek out the Association in this period. We do indeed have an equity problem at SFU, but it is not one that can be solved by short term measures; it requires investment in the people who work here.

By far SFU's most insecure and poorly paid workforce is its cleaning and food service staff. These workers are not SFU employees, but are hired by a third-party contractor for a single purpose - to keep costs (that is, their salaries and benefits) as low as possible and to maximize the University's ability to simply discharge them at any time it chooses to find a new contractor.

Among our own members, those in structurally marginalized groups are over-represented among part-time and limited term faculty. Yet the University appears to have no interest in providing security for people in these ranks who have served 7, 10,

even 15 years in term positions. And as SFU's own data shows, this is not because funding is not available, but because it has chosen, for many years now, to create additional administrative positions while neglecting faculty renewal (see <https://www.sfufa.ca/sfufa-audit-of-decanal-and-university-staffing/>).

In our last round of bargaining, we found that the most significant equity-related issues were strongly resisted by SFU. The University sought to increase teaching loads and eliminate provisions for non-teaching time for those of our members who are lowest-paid and teaching the most students. It refused anything but an HR-based training approach to EDI, while evidence shows such an approach is ineffective if not actually counter-productive unless carefully and thoughtfully implemented over time. When we introduced language on decolonization, the University would consider nothing but a generic statement on reconciliation - it would not use the term decolonization, and would allow no recognition of the centrality of land. In transitioning to the new defined-benefit pension plan, SFU was adamant that it would only allow the change if we as faculty assumed all costs. This is one of the most meaningful equity gains made for our membership, as under the previous, open market system, women paid some 30% more for annuities than men. But SFU was unwilling to contribute any actual dollars to making it happen.

Away from the bargaining table the issues continue to pile up. The University's disability benefits do not apply to those with chronic conditions who can continue to work part time. Some Departments are denied permission to decrease workloads for contingent and part-time faculty even when those Departments have the funds available themselves. Senior Administration sends out lengthy messages advising our members to 'take vacations' while actively proposing to *increase* the workloads of people for whom the taking of vacations is already impossible. Demands are made to expand flexible course offerings while the costs in workload and equipment are borne by faculty members themselves. And in the midst of the pandemic, as levels of burnout shot through the roof (not to mention the sick leaves and interpersonal conflicts that arise from burnout) SFU consistently refused to address challenges to the mental health of our members, calling instead for faculty to 'be kind'.

In recent months, SFUFA has been asked to support SFU applications to the BC Human Rights Commissioner seeking exemptions in support of hiring processes that are limited to members of designated equity groups. We were pleased to do so, and will continue to do so, in those cases where active consultation with and support from units is evident. But our priority is and must be the ongoing- and indeed growing – structural inequities our members (and other community members) face, and the increasing managerialism and top down decision-making of recent years. That is, we as SFUFA

must commit ourselves to an equity agenda rooted in the material conditions of SFU's existing faculty and staff, and to seeing that agenda developed through active and responsive consultation with the community.

The University's EDI mandate arose from its commitment to the 2017 Universities Canada declaration of Inclusive Excellence Principles to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion. In particular, signatories committed to "developing and/or maintaining an equity, diversity and inclusion action plan in consultation with students, faculty, staff and administrators, and particularly with individuals from under-represented groups" (Universities Canada, 2017). There is little mention in the UC document, however, of the systemic and structural change that is required to advance equity. EDI initiatives, then, too often result in quick fix solutions to complex issues, a check box approach, and an emphasis on diverse bodies on campuses rather than on the supports needed for their success.

Equity is not about statements of sympathy, nor image management. Equity is not only about new hires. It is about the everyday practices, and decisions we make to prioritize fair treatment for those who work and learn at the University. Equity is, for example, about taking seriously the over-reliance on and abuse of sessional and limited term faculty; it's about approaching disability accommodation from a person-centred perspective; it's about making sure that Black and Indigenous faculty and faculty of colour are not over-burdened with service to fulfill EDI mandates; it's about deciding that dollars are going to be spent on people, not on communications about people.

SFUFA is deeply committed to equity. And we are eager to work with the University to start taking steps to advance equity by improving the material conditions of all members of our community:

- To ensure that every single person working at SFU gets a living wage and job security;
- To provide proper pensions to every employee;
- To prioritize the moving of limited term faculty, sessional instructors, and others on term appointments into secure, continuing jobs, recognizing that members of designated equity groups are over-represented among part time and precarious workers;
- To take bullying and harassment complaints seriously and work with employees and employee organizations to establish processes that are fair and transparent;
- To enhance disability accommodation and expand long term disability coverage to all those who need it;

- To address equity in hiring through collegial processes that enhance rather than undermine academic governance;
- To centre the University's equity work on those areas that most directly impact lived experience – workload, salary equity, mental and physical health, and commitment to a vibrant and engaged system of collegial governance.

SFUFA takes equity seriously. It is time to stop changing hashtags and start changing lives.