

**Minutes of the SFUFA Executive Meeting**  
**Held January 13, 2022**  
**Via zoom video-conference and in AQ2035**  
**9.30 – 12 noon**

**In attendance:**

Kumari Beck (Education) Chair  
David Broun (Physics)  
Dave Hannah (Business)  
Dan Laitsch (Education)  
Suzanne Norman (Publishing)  
Steeve Mongrain (Economics)  
Janice Regan (Computing Science)  
Ljiljana Trajkovic (Engineering Science)  
Rochelle Tucker (Health Sciences)  
Baharak Yousefi (Library)  
Melanie Lam (Minutes)  
Jennifer Scott (Member Services)  
Brian Green (Executive Director)

**Regrets:**

The meeting was called to order at 9.31 am.

**1. Approval of Agenda**

Approved with the following additions: Student online behavior; letter from Equity committee.

**Moved:** Dan Laitsch/ Dave Hannah

**Carried.**

**2. Approval of Minutes of December 9, 2021**

Approved as circulated.

**Moved:** Ljiljana Trajkovic/Dan Laitsch

**Carried.**

**3. Business arising**

i. Return to campus issues:

- It was reported that after consulting with their Deans, UBC has postponed the return to in-person learning until February 7<sup>th</sup>. The Presidents of BC Universities have continued to have discussions about this but not every school has taken the same stance as UBC. SFU has decided to align with the PHO office and will be returning to in-person learning on January 24<sup>th</sup>. There is a student petition that is being circulated, requesting that SFU continue with on-line learning for the rest of the semester. Many faculty members are

reporting that students are generally feeling anxious about having to return to in-person classes. After much discussion, the executive noted that SFUFA would advocate for higher safety standards on campus, for the choice for vulnerable faculty with large classes to switch to online, for the distribution of good quality masks and frequent updates on HVAC systems in classrooms.

**4. Presidents Report – Kumari Beck**

- Kumari and Brian have received several email messages from faculty outlining their concerns around returning to in-person teaching in January. UNBC are waiting until the end of January to decide as to which courses will go online, UVIC faculty are working with their labour unions to improve safety conditions and it was reported that they have access to rapid testing sites on campus.
- Accommodations for dual mode teaching: UVIC has given their Instructors additional TA support which their faculty members are happy about.
- Concordia University of Edmonton Faculty Association (CUEFA) are on strike; issues on the table are better working conditions including moving to manageable workloads for teaching faculty and Librarians, improvements to salary - CUE ranks 68<sup>th</sup> out of 70 Canadian universities in terms of salary, and better job security. CUEFA made history as being the first Alberta faculty association to take job action and many other CAUT associations have donated considerable amounts towards their strike fund. After some discussion the SFUFA executive voted on the following motion.

**Motion:**

That SFUFA make a donation of \$1000 towards the CUEFA strike fund.

Moved: Kumari Beck/Janice Regan

**Carried unanimously.**

**5. Executive Director report – Brian Green**

- There are still many unresolved advocacy cases being worked on, many members are stressed and are at a breaking point and it has been difficult to get SFU to act on many of these issues. Ella Forbes-Chilibeck is the new Executive Director hired at Faculty Relations and will be starting on January 17<sup>th</sup>. FR has noted they would be hiring a second person with a legal background to manage labour relations issues.
- Brian gave an update on two advocacy cases that will most likely progress to arbitration and one to expedited arbitration.
- SFSS Accessible learning campaign: In September 2021 the SFSS launched this campaign asking that lecture recordings be provided to students and that it be made a standard practice for all future terms, and SFU has now approved the recording of lectures. SFUFA, together with TSSU is drafting a letter to SFU, asking for the necessary supports and

resources for faculty for the recording of lectures and that proper procedures be put in place to protect faculty members' intellectual property.

- SFUFA has received complaints from members regarding administrative interference with changes to the terms of endowments, Research Chair supports, and terms governing major grants. An email message was sent to members about this and Brian noted that SFUFA is seeking advice from CAUT to ensure terms set by granting agencies are upheld and that academic freedom is protected.
- SFU has indicated that it would likely be willing to recognize Research Associates as members of SFUFA, but not all RA's would be eligible. SFUFA will be reaching out to RA's and further discussions will be taking place with SFU legal counsel and the VPA.
- Steeve Mongrain who is currently SFUFA's Treasurer and signing authority will be going on study leave and a replacement signing authority is needed for the short term.

**Motion:**

That Janice Regan be appointed as SFUFA's signing authority until Steeve Mongrain returns from study leave.

**Moved:** Kumari Beck/Rochelle Tucker

**Carried.**

## **6. Committee Reports**

- Equity committee: The committee has sent a letter to the VPA about Workload and Equity at SFU. Uneven distribution of workload has been a key equity issue at SFU for a number of years and has been made worse by the pandemic. The committee will be contacting Deans to ask them to share information on teaching workload policies in their faculties. There isn't a lot of information available on this, and there doesn't appear to be consistency across faculties. But the first step for the committee is to identify and understand departmental/unit practices across SFU.
- Departmental Contacts Committee: Dan Laitsch, Chair, noted that the first meeting was held in December and a second meeting has been scheduled for Thursday, January 20<sup>th</sup>. Some discussion items on the table are: PDR approval process, CAL support for exams, vacations for teaching faculty, academic freedom, concerns about SETC and workload.
- Chairs and Directors Committee: Kumari Beck, Chair, noted that the group will be meeting for the first time on Friday, January 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Central Safety Committee: Rochelle Tucker has been unable to attend meetings due to a calendar conflict. If anyone else on the executive is interested in filling in, please contact Rochelle for more information.
- Bargaining: Chief Bargainer David Broun gave an update on bargaining and noted that UVIC and UBC will be starting soon, UNBC doesn't get underway for another year.

SFUFA's bargaining survey will be circulated to members within the next couple of weeks. The bargaining advisory committee has met and one issue that came up is faculty workload, in the context of equity.

**7. a) Procedures for approving waivers of prerequisites**

It was reported that in the Business faculty, a waiver was approved by an Instructor, but was subsequently turned down by the Department Administrator. What is the practice in other departments? In Economics, the undergrad Chair decides following a discussion with the Instructor, In Education and Publishing, the Instructor appears to make the final decision. In Computing Science, the Instructor decides and communicates the decision with the Undergrad Chair. After some discussion it was agreed that departments should clarify these procedures for faculty. If faculty members have concerns, they should be encouraged to bring it forward to SFUFA.

b) Tuition waiver for family members: a waiver form has to be filled out for each semester and has to be sent to the Department Chair for signature, which seems like a waste of time. SFUFA will take this issue to the Joint Committee to see if the process can be made more efficient.

c) Student behavior: More and more students are engaging in offensive social media behavior by making racist and sexist remarks against faculty members with little or no consequences for their behaviour. After some discussion, the executive noted it would be best to raise awareness of this issue by including the topic in the regular member bulletins. Members who have concerns, should be bringing them forward to SFUFA or to Director of Campus Public Safety - Andrea Ringrose, who is another good resource.

**8. Items for Consultation – January 20th**

- i. COVID safety plans and protocols - given rising case counts and the fact that other universities have instituted more online teaching than SFU intends, SFUFA would like to discuss what specific steps will be taken to ensure the safety of the campus community with the return to face to face teaching on January 24th. Among specific issues we hope to discuss:
  - options for faculty autonomy in choosing to continue remote instruction;
  - consideration of an upper limit for in-person class size;
  - access to rapid testing and N95 masks;
  - the possibility of running clinics to provide booster shots;
  - how the community might be provided with regular air quality updates
- ii. IT maintenance - we have received complaints regarding poorly scheduled IT maintenance. Recently both canvas and go.sfu.ca were taken down for maintenance at critical periods for faculty course preparation. We would like to ask that a maintenance

schedule be developed and communicated widely that places primacy on avoiding disruption.

- iii. VP PEI - now that the announcement has been made regarding the new VP PEI position, SFUFA would like to hear details about SFU's organizational plan, and specifically how joint responsibility for Faculty Relations will be arranged between this new office and the VP Academic.
- iv. Campus management of ice and snow - the recent snowstorm indicated that SFU's snow and ice removal readiness was insufficient. Significant walkways and parking lots were unsafe for vehicle and pedestrian traffic while the University was open. In addition, maintenance is required even during times of closure so long as services such as the daycare are open. We would like to ask that SFU conduct a review of its extreme weather readiness given that we can expect these kinds of weather patterns to continue.
- v. SFU used to meet annually with all employee groups to review usage rates of sick leave, long term disability and various benefits. While these meetings stopped happening a few years ago, we are hearing more and more about sick leaves and it appears anecdotally that numbers may be increasing. We would like to ask that annual review of usage be reinstated, beginning this semester.
- vi. Workload - SFUFA continues to hear that workload related to the uncertainties and unique demands of COVID continues to be among our members' top concerns; we have provided our survey results to this group, and once again request a process of discussion to consider how faculty can be compensated for the additional workload burden of the past two years.

**9. Other Business – none.**

**Adjournment.** There was no other business and the meeting was adjourned at 11.40 am.