

Dear SFUFA Members:

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### **Welcome Message from the President**

Dear Colleagues,

The SFUFA Executive would like to welcome everyone to the new academic year. I and the Executive hope that everyone had the opportunity to take some well-deserved time off this summer. Hopefully, each member has had some time to reinvigorate themselves.

After four years of tireless service, Kumari Beck is stepping down as SFUFA president. The Executive would like to express their heartfelt thanks to Kumari for her diligence and dedication to the Association. She has been an inspiration and mentor for many of us. Fortunately, for all of us, Kumari has agreed to serve on the Executive as a regular member for another term.

Departing the Executive this year are Janice Regan, Ronda Arab and Adena Brons. I would like to thank each of them for their years of dedicated service. Personally, I found that their dedication, energy, wisdom, and attitude greatly contributed to the collegial atmosphere of the Executive and led to changes that will benefit the entire collective.

Joining the Executive this year are Chloe Riley (Library), Daniel Ahadi (Communication), and Jeremy Brown (History). I would like to welcome them and let them know that we look forward to working with them over the course of their terms. Returning members are Liliana Trajkovic (Engineering), Tamara O'Doherty (Criminology), Michael Hathaway (Sociology and Anthropology), and Claudia Wong Einwag (Linguistics). Finally, Bertille Antoine (Economics) has graciously agreed to continue as both Vice President and Treasurer. As always, we rely heavily on our front office: our Executive Director, Brian Green; our Labour Relations Director, Jennifer Scott; our Executive Assistant, Melanie Lam; and joining us this past summer, our new Labour

Relations Officer, Katie Gravestock. We are thrilled to have Katie join us, and look forward to introducing her to members over the course of this semester.

While the summer months offer some respite from our normal duties, it was a busy time for many at SFUFA. We entered into collective bargaining with the university as our current contract expired on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025. As members of the public sector, we are impacted by mandates government sets through the BC Public Sector Employers' Council (PSEC). Though the details of any such mandate have not yet been announced, the Health Employees Union has tentatively accepted reached a framework agreement. The BC General Employees Union, however, has called for strike action. Exactly what emerges across the public sector in the next months is unclear. Fortunately, our bargaining team, led by David Broun has proven itself most capable over the last few rounds of negotiations.

While bargaining demands a good deal of attention, we as a collective have other issues that need addressing as well. Collegial governance remains an issue, and has to be addressed not only at the bargaining table but also in our academic units, at Senate, and in all that we do as faculty. We also continue to seek mechanisms for approaches to conflict resolution that avoid lengthy and costly legal battles. And our Equity Committee continues give focused attention to the barriers that continue to exist for so many members, whether related to salary, workload, personal safety, or any other matters that arises from or demonstrates discrimination.

As in the past, we will continue to publish our bulletin on a regular basis. We welcome input from all and invite all members to feel free to contact the Executive if they have questions or concerns. Many units have faculty liaisons for direct communication with SFUFA and we will continue to organize ad hoc meetings with those people periodically. Finally, we hope to see you all at our socials events – dates and locations will be announced as the semester progresses.

As your new president, it is my honour to serve the Association. It is the Executive's goal to improve working conditions for all faculty while acting to ensure that the academic mission of the university is placed front and centre in university decision-making and in all that we as SFUFA do.

On behalf of the Executive, we wish you all a healthy, happy and productive year.

Sincerely,

Tim Beischlag, SFUFA President

## **Collective Bargaining**

After taking the month of August away from the table, we are back to meeting with the University in the coming weeks. In the absence of a clear mandate from the province, it is unclear what SFU's opening position on salary might be, or when we will begin to discuss issues relating to salary and benefits. Nonetheless, we will continue to meet regarding the many other outstanding issues that members have identified as priorities. Up to this point bargaining has been productive, with several articles already agreed, and we are hopeful that this will continue as we move into the Fall semester sessions.

## **Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL)**

We have heard from many of you regarding issues emerging from the Centre for Accessible Learning.

The University has convened a committee to review GP 26, the Policy that governs the CAL; there are, however, no SFUFA members on the committee, and our requests for SFUFA member representation have been denied, even though SFUFA members will be among the people most impacted by changes to this policy. Additionally, under the current GP 26, the University is required to convene a CAL Advisory Committee. This has been unilaterally dissolved, eliminating what little faculty member input was in place.

The responses from Senior Administration to faculty concerns have been disappointing at best. A group of faculty members developed a robust set of recommendations for the GP 26 committee, but has had no response after many months, and the CAL revision committee has refused to even meet with them.

This is not the first or even the second or third time that we have seen "consultation" processes that bypass best practices and even existing policies, and exclude major stakeholders. We will continue to press this particular issue, but also note that it is symptomatic of a wider pattern of disregard for meaningful collegial governance.

## **Course Release Costs**

Many members have noted a significant increase to the cost of buying out courses, as is permitted by many research grants. While just a few years ago, faculty members could buy out a course for approximately \$12,000, the cost has risen across the university and in some areas is over double that amount.

Below we compare the cost of buy-outs in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at SFU with those in corresponding Faculties at other BC public universities.

UNBC: indexed directly to the cost of hiring a sessional instructor; a 3-credit hour course would be approximately **\$8800**

UVic: faculty are restricted from using their own funds to buy out their teaching. Using internal, eligible grant funds or funds from a not-for-profit organization is possible, and the cost is directly indexed to the hiring of a sessional instructor; a 3-credit hour course would be approximately **\$4155**

UBC: the cost of buying out a course is **\$15,000**

SFU: the cost of buying a course for the 2025-26 academic year: **\$29,550**. This number is projected to be **\$33,434** by the 2030-2031 academic year.

Other SFU Faculties differ from the FASS rate above, and similarly different rates may exist at other institutions. Here at SFU, current costs in other Faculties are as follows:

Science: **20% of faculty salary**

Applied Science: varies, average is approximately **\$25,000**

Education: **\$15,750**

FCAT: varies by rank, from **\$19,200-\$26,100**

FHS: **12% of faculty salary**

Environment: approximately **\$20,000**

Beedie: approximately **\$25,000**

A TSSU Sessional instructor hired to teach a 3-credit hour course will be paid **\$7718**.

It is worth noting that while faculty salaries are not subject to cost-of-living indexing, the University has built in such indexing when pricing teaching buy-out, so the percentage of faculty salary required to buy out a single course will be increasing by 2.5% each year.

## **Best Practices in Departmental Governance and Workload**

The Association Executive and the SFUFA Equity Committee are interested in identifying not only where challenges exist, but where policies and protocols have been effective in protecting and enhancing collegiality in general, and approaches to workload in particular.

We invite members to share with us any Departmental protocols that are working well to ensure Departmental autonomy and meaningful consideration of faculty needs. We hope to be able to share examples of best practices to assist units that are seeking to develop or renew their own internal guidelines.

### **Reminder – Alternate Contacts**

Given periodic disruption of SFU's internet and email systems, the Association is collecting alternate contacts (email or phone) for members, to be used only in the event that we need to reach you during a time that the University's communications systems are not functioning. Members can send alternate email addresses and/ or phone numbers to SFUFA Executive Director, Brian Green, at [bsgreen@sfu.ca](mailto:bsgreen@sfu.ca)