

Dear SFUFA Members:

The following bulletin is sent on behalf of the Faculty Association Executive and contains information on:

- Member dues vote
- Collective Bargaining
- Grievance and Arbitration report
- Staffing and Administrative Hub Structure
- Reminder – alternate contacts

## **Member Dues**

In May of this year, SFUFA members voted in favour of adjusting the dues rate to 1.15% of salary. This change will take effect the first pay period after September 1.

## **Collective Bargaining**

SFUFA and SFU continue to negotiate a new collective agreement. After many months of effort by many unions and associations across the sector, the University's monetary offer has increased to an amount consistent with others in the public sector. This is a significant change and will help to facilitate a new collective agreement.

That said, how monies on the table are to be spent remains under discussion, as a portion is likely restricted to benefits or other non-salary supports. In addition, there do remain important non-monetary issues to be addressed, including provisions for tenure and promotion for Teaching Faculty, issues related to TTR balance, and operation of the salary system, including what if any provisions are made for market differentials and how these interact with the broader salary system.

With summer approaching, it is unclear what our bargaining schedule will look like. We are, however, committed to the work, and have signalled that we are happy to exchange proposals and keep the negotiation process moving even if formal meetings of full committees are not possible.

When an Agreement is ultimately ratified, members will receive all owed salary increases – including pension contributions – retroactively.

## **Grievance and Arbitration Success Report**

As reported previously, the Association supports and advocates for 300-400 members in any given year. Only a small fraction of these are formal grievances, and only some of those require formal mediation or arbitration proceedings to resolve.

The following is a brief overview of the trajectory in numbers of cases that required formal settlements, with or without a legal process. We present here only cases since the Association's unionization in 2014.

Between 2014 and 2020, we had 5 significant disputes with SFU; 2 of these required external appeal, and only 1 was ultimately not settled by mutual agreement. In 2021, we had four major cases, 3 of which resulted in settlement.

It is since 2022 that things have really become more challenging. In that year, 7 cases – more than 2014-2020 combined – required more action, and by 2025 we had over 20 in a single year. Currently we have 23 cases actively in some stage of the legal process. It is a concerning trajectory, indeed.

Our success rate, however, is strong and we provide below an overview so members can see the results of our work.

Of the 63 legal disputes with SFU between 2014 and now:

- 40 were resolved or satisfactorily settled (with or without third party assistance)
- 15 cases that required adjudication resulted in wins or member awards
- 1 case resulted in a split decision, in which the arbitrator found for both parties on different aspects of the case
- 3 cases were lost
- 4 cases were withdrawn by the Association as they were unlikely to succeed

In total, 87% of our cases result in settlements or wins, with 11% lost or dropped. And of cases that have gone to a formal hearing and been decided by an arbitrator, we have a success rate of 80% (wins or awards for members).

SFUFA continues to believe that the best resolutions are local, informal, and rooted in discussion directly with those most sensitive to local departmental and Faculty cultures. Grievance numbers from 2010-2021 demonstrate that another way of doing things is possible. And we will continue to encourage these approaches. Where we need to engage more formally, however, we will not hesitate to do so. Our record is strong, and we will continue to use whatever tools are necessary to properly advocate for faculty members.

## **Staffing and Administrative Hub Structure**

In recent weeks the Faculty of Arts and Social Science (FASS) has announced the introduction of a 'hub structure' for staffing and administration. It is uncertain whether this model has been or will be rolled out in other Faculties. The model seeks to significantly change departmental staffing, having staff serve multiple departments so as to reduce costs.

The Association has serious concerns that the hub model will increase workload for both staff and faculty, reduce support for students, and ultimately lead to further cuts in academic units.

We understand that there are real budgetary concerns at the University. We further understand that the Deans have been asked to find efficiencies where they can. But this approach, undertaken without the direct engagement of faculty members or impacted staff, is not consistent with the administration's stated goal of protecting and prioritizing the academic mission.

There is no shortage of other ways that Faculties can reduce expenditure while also protecting necessary staff supports and lowering workloads. For example, the University's use of Kuali for signature sheets rather than a fillable PDF has introduced considerable expense, added an unnecessary administrative burden, and created a much more onerous and time-consuming process than previously. Similarly, policing of faculty members' TTR balance has increased workload and contributed to unnecessary administrative bloat, in the process not resolving but creating more disputes and disruptions to faculty work. We are confident that should the University decide to reach out for meaningful collaboration with faculty and staff alike, we could work together to find efficiencies without undermining departmental supports.

Faculty members in many units have expressed their own concerns and frustrations regarding the introduction of the hub model. And SFUFA is, in partnership with other campus unions, writing a joint letter to raise these concerns and others.

There is no doubt that efficiencies can be made and administrative costs reduced to better align university spending with the academic mission. But there is also no doubt that making such decisions as to what to cut or change and how, without consulting either the people who know the work and those who rely that support is only likely to make matters worse.

### **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 <mailto:bsgreen@sfu.ca>