

Minutes of the SFUFA Executive Meeting

Held November 3, 2022

In Halpern 126 & via zoom

9.30 – noon

In attendance:

Lyn Bartram (SIAT) via zoom
Bertille Antoine (Economics)
Kumari Beck (Education) Chair
Dave Hannah (Business)
Dan Laitsch (Education)
Janice Regan (Computing Science) via zoom
Ljiljana Trajkovic (Engineering Science) via zoom
Rochelle Tucker (Health Sciences)
Baharak Yousefi (Library) via zoom
Brian Green (Executive Director)
Melanie Lam (Executive Assistant, Minutes)

Regrets:

Jennifer Scott (Member Services)

The meeting was called to order at 9.35 am.

1. **Approval of Agenda**

Approved as circulated.

Moved: Bertille Antoine/Lyn Bartram

Carried.

2. **Approval of the October 6th Minutes.**

Approved with two edits.

Moved: Dave Hannah/Bertille Antoine

Carried.

3. **Business arising**

SFUFA has been asked if any action has been taken by the Association towards maintaining Covid-19 protocols and safety measures to protect faculty members, especially those who are immunocompromised. The following points were made: Unlike in 2021, BC universities are currently not demanding that staff and students wear masks and most people at SFU don't wear masks; some Instructors who are immunocompromised have succeeded in asking their students to mask up, and others have not; wearing masks in indoor settings is recommended but not required by the PHO and SFU is following that mandate; it is unlikely that individual faculty members at SFU can initiate a mask mandate in their own classrooms; there are more deaths from Covid this year than in 2020 & 2021; Royal Roads University has a contract with their administration to allow individual faculty members to impose classroom mask mandates; peoples habits are slipping; SFUFA will talk to the Central Health and Safety Committee to see if faculty with compromised immune systems or who have family members with compromised immune systems, are able to mandate additional safety measures in their classrooms.

4. **Presidents Report – Kumari Beck**

- The administration would like SFUFA's support in moving the Human Rights Office under the VP, People, Equity and Inclusion (VPPEI) portfolio.
- The SFUFA equity committee will be meeting with the VP, People, Equity and Inclusion on Friday.

- SFU cluster-hire of black faculty initiative: Brian and Kumari have been invited by the Director, EDI, in Faculty Relations, to review and give feedback on the draft document.
- SFU has hired an international search firm Perret-Laver, to manage the search for the Executive Director, Faculty Relations.
- A search committee has been established for the provost and Vice-President Academic position. The membership of the committee appears to be a good group of people and SFU is accepting feedback from the community on the candidate profile via written submissions and questionnaires. A forum is being held on November 9th and the search will continue through the spring of next year. A search committee is also being formed for a new Dean and Assistant Provost of Graduate Studies. The renewal process for the Vice-Provost and Associate VP, Learning and Teaching will commence soon.
- The provincial government has provided \$1.5 million in support to SFU, to plan and develop a business case for creating a medical school program in SFU Surrey. A committee will be struck soon and will comprise of 4 faculty members, from Health Science and Science. There will be an opportunity for campus labour groups to provide input.
- Conferences: SFUFA delegates attended the CUFA BC executive meeting on October 18th and the Western Regional Conference in Brandon, Manitoba from October 20-22nd. CUFA made an excellent presentation at WRC and Kumari noted she would circulate the slides.

5. Executive Director report

- As part of the engagement and consultation process for the proposed new medical school, Brian will be meeting with Dr. Roger Strasser, who will be working on the business plan.
- Bargaining: SFUFA has been having good conversations with other unions and will be heading to the table for bargaining session #1 on November 22nd. GWI's announced by BCGEU are roughly 3% for the first year, up to 6% in the second year, and 3% in year three. It is rumoured that there might be "monies" available for EDI, mental health and indigenous initiatives.
- It appears teaching faculty are being told again that they are not allowed to run for a department chair position, although this was cleared up by the previous VPA and is in contradiction of the terms and conditions of the Collective Agreement. It was noted that SFUFA has filed a grievance against the employer.
- Human rights office (HRO) move to VPPEI portfolio: This office who has previously reported to the BOG and Secretary and has remained arms-length from the university administration, will be moving under the VPPEI portfolio. SFUFA is asking for this to be restored under the Secretary's portfolio. The Secretary has recently left the university and there appears to be no concrete plans to fill the position. This position answers to the BOG, provides impartial advice on the interpretation of policies & protocols, and ensures that senior administrators comply with their legal obligations, and having no plans to fill the position is very concerning to SFUFA. This, along with other issues which were discussed in length today, have raised serious concerns about the shift in the decision-making process at SFU, and the weakening of collegial governance. After much discussion, it was recommended that this be raised at the next consult meeting with senior

admin next Thursday. Some other follow up action items were discussed by the executive, including issuing a statement/bulletin to members outlining SFUFA's concerns.

6. Member Services report- Jennifer Scott was absent and there was no report.

7. Results of academic freedom question on bargaining survey

- It was noted that in the recent bargaining survey, 40% of respondents noted there is erosion of academic freedom at SFU and this appears to be an important topic for our members. The following comments were noted in the survey: The university administration is controlling what faculty members do; many are concerned with EDI and the manner in which it is being rolled out; many feel they can't speak their mind because of a threat to their psychological safety; administrators don't have their backs; faculty are being criticized by colleagues for having different views; 18% said they felt pressured to do certain kinds of research; there is increasing pressure from students and admin.

After some discussion, the executive recommended that education of members on academic freedom is key. Some ideas on how to do this: hosting forums for members, especially for junior faculty, where members can hear real stories and learn from each other, raising awareness about CAUT educational sessions, training faculty to become aware of attitudes that might be detrimental to their teaching and research, teaching about the basic principles of underlying bias, having conversations about this at the faculty level is more beneficial than asking faculty to adopt frameworks brought forward by the administration. Alison Hearn, Chair of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) Academic Freedom and Tenure committee will be making a presentation at the fall GM on November 17th and this can be used as an education piece for members.

8. Committee Reports.

- Community Relations update was tabled to next meeting.
- Equity committee: In a letter dated October 30th, the committee outlined their thoughts about workload inequities associated with joint appointments, and Brian noted he would take this issue forward for review to the bargaining committee. The committee is meeting with the VP, People, Equity & Inclusion on Friday at 5:30 pm. The committee will be revising their TOR and the executive reminded the Chair that Equity is not a subcommittee of the executive committee and does not take direction from the executive committee, it is rather an independent ad hoc committee which might share valuable information with the exec committee.

9. Items for Consultation – November 10th @10:30

- i. Exam scheduling issues - raise this under business arising.
- ii. SFUFA has serious concerns about some recent changes in administrative structure. We continue to oppose the move of the Human Rights Office from its current location, involving dual reporting to the Secretary and the Board, to the VP PEI portfolio. We were disturbed to hear that the Secretary has left the University and that that portfolio is currently empty, with no concrete plans to fill it. The Secretary plays critical roles in administration and governance, one of which is to ensure the institution is held accountable to its own policies, procedures and governance structures. Like the move of the HRO, changes to the Secretary's portfolio can have serious

impacts on other arm's length offices, such as Internal Audit and the Ombuds, and can weaken collegial governance. We are formally requesting restoration of the Secretary's portfolio and reversal of the decision to move the HRO.

- iii. SFUFA understands that SFU is entering a period of fiscal belt tightening and some members are hearing rumours of a soft hiring freeze or budget cuts. Previously SFU indicated it would be acting to re-centre the academic mission and reverse the long-term neglect of faculty renewal. Would like to hear how SFU plans to ensure that the faculty renewal piece continues and is not impacted by any general cost-cutting that is anticipated. We would also like to hear what will be done to ensure there are not negative impacts on teaching related supports, given that already the technology and infrastructure to support teaching is already inadequate.
- iv. Grading guidelines have been introduced in a number of areas, and members have received mixed messages as to the enforceability of such guidelines. Our position, of course, is that academic freedom is a paramount concern, but we are not certain as to how SFU views the enforceability of grading guidelines. We would like to hear what the approach of SFU is to these questions and to the trend towards grading guidelines in general.
- v. SFUFA understands the library is moving from the VPR to the VPA portfolio. We would like to hear the reasons for the decision, and specifically whether this is connected to the move towards a new Provost model or whether there are other motivations. We also would like to ask whether additional offices are also expected to be moving.
- vi. We would like to discuss the costs MECS is charging to units for catering and other services while simultaneously restricting units' ability to use other service providers. We will provide examples, but the prices charged are exorbitant, and essentially tax academic units for any social or meetings costs. The current arrangement undermines units' abilities to host conferences or retreats, or engage in important community partnerships, and needs to be reviewed and adjusted.

10. Other business

- Suggested future consult items: move to MS OneDrive, erosion of academic integrity.

11. Adjournment: There was no other business and the meeting was adjourned at 12.06 pm.