

NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 1997 VOLUME 24.1 Jeffery Donaldson, Editor

President's Report


THE YEAR AHEAD


The MUFA president's "The Year Ahead" report has become a standard feature of September's *Newsletter*. Its primary purpose is to give the membership an overview of the most significant matters falling within the Association's purview (See Article 2 of our Constitution) that have been, or will be addressed by the Executive that took office in May.

I have organized the report according to the three levels at which we contribute to discussions, beginning where we have the most influence.

I. THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL


1. ITEMS IN OUR TWO-YEAR REMUNERATIONS AGREEMENT

 Our agreement calls for a cap on the total amount of money allocated for the faculty tuition benefit at the current cost of approximately \$200,000. A three-person MUFA Committee has been established that will put options before the membership. The members are Anne Pottier, David Butterfield and Bill Anderson. Once the preferred option has been identified, it will be taken as a proposal for consideration by the Joint Committee. It is hoped that the process can be completed in time to implement the revised version of the benefit in the 1998-99 fiscal year.

 In recognition of the need to increase funding for individual faculty research expressed in our Agreement, a request that some of the McMaster University Futures Fund (MUFF) be allocated for this purpose was made to the MUFF Committee in May. At the time of writing, this committee is still deliberating on how to distribute the approximately \$400,000 of interest money available for this year.

2. NEW POLICY DOCUMENTS

The development of new policies is a time-consuming but necessary process. There are diverse initiating mechanisms and many stages in the development and approval process. MUFA may become involved at any stage. Three new policies deserve attention here.

 All faculty should by now have received a statement of the "Policy on the Public Release of Students' Ratings of Teaching Effectiveness," the form on which they may give permission for more public access to the results of the summative evaluation question than was formerly provided, and a sample of the format to be used in the release of the results. In the case of this particular policy, the Association had a role rather late in the drafting process. Thanks in particular to David Hitchcock, such things as an opt-in clause to replace the original opt-out clause, and the establishment of a committee which includes a MUFA representative to oversee the implementation and evaluation of the policy, became part of the package ultimately approved by Senate and the Board of Governors. [See "Release of Student Ratings" on pp. 6-7 of this *Newsletter*.]

In the process of consulting the membership on the public release of student ratings, some questions were raised about whether the ratings were valid, and indeed about McMaster's system of evaluating teaching in general. In response to the concerns, we are planning to bring to campus a leading expert in the field. He will speak about evaluating teaching in general, and our system in particular, and engage in discussion on these topics. Details will be provided when plans have been finalized.



A two person, "little j", committee was established by the Joint Committee to develop an accommodation policy that would be consistent with generally accepted principles but would also take account of distinctive features of faculty work. The objective of any such policy is to provide for such things as health problems that make normal working conditions inappropriate. MUFA's member is Rhoda Howard and Peter Sutherland is the administration appointee.

❓ In some cases a new policy document becomes necessary in order to synthesize provisions on a given topic that are scattered across a number of distinct documents, and are ambiguous, in conflict with one another, or silent on a type of case that has arisen. The new document on suspension of faculty was necessitated by such circumstances. A draft version has just been discussed by the Executive, and modifications have been proposed. The document will be reviewed by us before it goes to Senate, after comments on the draft and our suggestions have been made by other committees.

3. REVISIONS TO POLICY DOCUMENTS

The most important policy document for faculty is the one that deals with tenure and promotion, often referred to as "the yellow document." Proposals to modify it are subjected to intensive scrutiny. At present a proposal advanced by the Provost and Vice President (Academic) to change the membership on Faculty and Senate Tenure & Promotion committees is being elaborated. The primary objective is to preserve the participation of senior administrators without contravening the principle that voting at more than one decision-making stage is undesirable. The issues are complex. We are extremely fortunate in having many members with a rich knowledge of why the policy has its current form, and also of the many cases decided under its terms. In particular Les King and Lorraine Allan should be recognized for labouring long and hard on our behalf, to very good effect.

4. TOPICS OF ON-GOING DISCUSSION

❓ In looking over past columns in this series, I noted that CAWAR appointments took up considerable space. Unfortunately there is a legacy of problems arising from a lack of clarity in the policies and practices associated with these appointments. Each case in dispute is receiving close attention in an attempt to ensure that fair outcomes are achieved.

❓ If our pension plan remains healthy, the MUFF fund should continue to generate a significant amount of interest annually. Members who wish to offer suggestions on how it should be used are advised to contact Executive members or our representative on the MUFF Committee, Wayne Lewchuk.

❓ It is probably fair to say that the size of the faculty complement is a topic of concern to the past, present and next president of MUFA. Another concern is the type of appointment made. At Trent University, an agreement on faculty complement was part of the package that resolved a protracted strike. Since we have had many early retirements, as have many other Ontario universities, a position on what is an appropriate faculty complement needs to be worked out. I think it is safe to say that we are committed to the view that if a university is to be an effective teaching and research institution non-tenured positions must be the exception, in each case justified by special circumstances that are clearly identified.

5. FORMAL AND INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS AND POLICY FORMULATION

❓ Your Executive participates in a host of formal and informal discussions that have an influence on the formulation of policy. In part, this is a matter of coming to understand the basic commitments of the players. Such discussions do consume a lot of time, but they are, I believe, an essential part of MUFA's work. Moreover, hurried decisions are likely to produce a legacy of trouble and labour. Among the policies currently "in the works" that necessarily take a lot of time for consultations, I include those dealing with conflict of interest, and with inventions and patents.

❓ An example of a useful informal meeting is this summer's two-day retreat dealing with staff and student concerns. The results will form the basis of Directions III. The retreat gave me an opportunity to gain insights into the perspectives of staff and students that few other occasions could provide.

Since we have no salary negotiations scheduled for this year, we will not face that particularly demanding assignment. But there is plenty of work to be done, as the above short list demonstrates.

II. THE PROVINCIAL LEVEL: ONTARIO CONFEDERATION OF FACULTY ASSOCIATIONS (OCUFA)

Over the past year, OCUFA has undertaken a restructuring exercise. The ultimate result of this appears to be a stronger and more responsive organization. A former president of MUFA, Hank Jacek of the Political Science Department, was an important participant in the process and this year became Vice-President of OCUFA. His analyses of the provincial scene are extremely valuable, and should prove useful to our delegate in representing our views at OCUFA meetings.

III. THE FEDERAL LEVEL: CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS (CAUT)

Of most obvious benefit to all of our members is the presence in Ottawa of CAUT, an organization that is in touch with developments in Canada and abroad that may affect university professors. They have the capacity to mobilize faculty associations across the country.

With the retirement of Donald Savage this year, a new CAUT executive director was sought. The CAUT Executive and their preferred candidate were unable to reach an agreement on the terms of employment. As a result, a one-year interim position was established and Claude Dionne of the University of Moncton appointed to it. The search for a permanent director has been resumed.

Currently CAUT is opposing the government of British Columbia in its bid to implement legislation establishing a new university, the Technical University of British Columbia (Tech BC). The central objections to the design of the institution are that it is to have no academic senate, no tenure, and little faculty control over the identification of research projects. [See "Technical University of BC" on p. 10 of this *Newsletter*.]

The CAUT keeps member associations in touch through email. It is an invaluable source of information on practices at other institutions. For regular information on the work of CAUT and matters of national importance, you should read the Bulletin and consult their web site (www.caut.ca).

This year, as in the past, we have asked CAUT for legal advice and services. Their legal staff has as range and quality of expertise on academic issues that is probably unobtainable elsewhere.

As a member association of CAUT, MUFA has a seat and a place for an observer at the Council meetings that are held twice a year in Ottawa. I expect to attend the November meeting. Developments at Tech BC will no doubt be the subject of lively discussion. Many people see it as a sort of test case in which the fundamental principles and processes we take for granted as a part of academic life are at stake.

SUMMING UP

Policy making is a time-consuming activity. It is most important that we try to anticipate points at which there could be ambiguity or unintended implications, and identify cases which do not fall within the provisions. Changes in the values and accepted practices in society may also make revisions to policy appropriate. So the work is never done. In a culture that demands rational and democratic decision-making such work is highly valued. We are fortunate in having a resourceful and knowledgeable MUFA staff, and a tradition of member participation in the work of the Association. Probably the majority of faculty at some time in their career work on MUFA's behalf, and play a significant role in ensuring that the legitimate interests of faculty are fairly represented. Of course the lines between MUFA's work and that of university governance are not clear. Indeed the relatively peaceful process of salary and benefit negotiations

may owe something to the fact that those involved often find it possible to identify in some respects as members of MUFA and as members of the administration; yet they may effectively represent either at different times.

We often call upon the spirit of collegiality to resolve differences within McMaster. I believe that spirit is rather fragile, and likely to weaken in hard economic times. Your Executive, with the help of MUFA members, will work to sustain it over the months ahead.

Catherine Beattie



Pregnancy/Parental/Paternity Leave Policy for Faculty

A revised Pregnancy/Parental/Paternity Leave Policy for Faculty was ratified by faculty on the CP/M plan as part of the remunerations package agreed to in the Joint Committee on March 13, 1997. As a result of input from concerned faculty members, the document was slightly amended and subsequently approved at the Joint Committee meeting on June 25, 1997. The amended policy, which is effective July 1, 1997, is available from your department chair, the Faculty Association, and Human Resources. The document is also available on the MUFA Web Page (<http://www.mcmaster.ca/mufa>). Click on "Faculty Handbook", then on Section C, and again on "Other Leaves".



Observers Needed

Required: faculty who are members of the Faculty Association -- yes, RETIREES also qualify -- to serve as observers for appeal and grievance hearings. The role of the Observer is to report on the adequacy of the procedures, with a view to making recommendations to improve relevant policies, not to comment on the conduct or the judgement of the tribunal. Hearings usually take place over one or two days. For more information, send us an e-mail (mufa@mcmaster.ca), give us a call (24682), or drop us a line (HH 103A).



Release of Student Ratings

Some time in the last month, your department chair should have asked you to sign a form indicating whether you agree to public release of student ratings of your overall teaching effectiveness.

This request results from a policy which McMaster's Senate adopted last May 12. The policy provides for release to the University library and to the McMaster Students' Union (MSU) of a summary of student responses to the global question on our student rating forms. ("Overall, how do you rate the effectiveness of the instructor as a teacher?" -- or similar.) The policy covers all undergraduate and MBA courses, but public release is contingent on consent of the instructor. That's why your chair asked you to sign the form, and why the form gave you the option to say "no".

Details of the policy are in the attachment to the form you were asked to sign, and are available from your chair or from me (e-mail "hitchckd"). So I won't repeat them here.

You might like to know, however, how this policy came about, and what role the Faculty Association had in shaping it.

The initiative came from the MSU, which has been lobbying for years for public release of student ratings. Their main rationale was that such release would give students information which would help them in choosing their courses.

The MSU managed to convince a Senate task force on the quality of university life to adopt their proposal as a recommendation to Senate. Senate then set up a working group to come forward with a detailed plan.

The working group had a representative from the MSU, but none from the Faculty Association. The Faculty Association Executive learned officially about the existence of this group from the MSU president, who came to seek the Association's support at an Executive meeting last November.

Alerted to what was going on, the Executive asked for, and got permission to appoint, a representative who could meet with the group as a non-voting consultant to express the Faculty Association's position on the detailed plan. The Executive appointed me to this role.

When I met the group, I discovered that they had virtually completed their work. I had a week to consult my colleagues and other Canadian faculty associations, and to read a wad of background documents. The consultation included an animated and fascinating discussion on the g-mufagab list.

As a result, I proposed on behalf of the Association a number of changes:

1. making public release contingent on the faculty member's written consent (as opposed to not requiring consent, as the original plan envisaged);
2. implementing the plan on a trial basis for two years, with a review mechanism which would include representation from the Faculty Association;
3. an implementation committee with representation from the MSU and the Faculty Association; and
4. allowance for consenting to public release in some courses and not others.

The first three proposals were accepted, but the fourth was not.

The implementation committee has secured an undertaking by the MSU that they would transmit the ratings information without editorial comment and that they would provide electronic access to it to current McMaster students only (through the MUGSI system).

McMaster's policy is far more considerate of the faculty member's right to privacy of this personnel information than are similar policies at most other universities. That is mainly due to the clarity and strictness of our policy on freedom of information and protection of privacy, which makes clear that evaluations of an individual's performance which the University collects for personnel purposes are private information, to be released only with the consent of the individual in question. But it also reflects the responsiveness of the working group to Faculty Association representation.

There is one disturbing note in this generally happy outcome. Had it not been for the visit of the MSU president to the Faculty Association Executive last November, the plan for public release of student ratings might well have gotten to Senate with no input from the Faculty Association. The Faculty Association was bypassed in setting up the working group -- not because of nefarious administrative machinations, but because of an oversight by the committee which set it up (a committee which included Association members).

In contrast, the part-time instructors, who are certified under the Ontario Labour Relations Act as a local of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, have a legally binding contract negotiated with the administration which prevents the University from publicly releasing student ratings of their teaching effectiveness. So their union has to be consulted before the policy can be extended to them.

This illustrates one advantage of being certified under the Labour Relations Act. I have always personally preferred that the Faculty Association not seek such certification, believing that it tends to lead to an unnecessarily adversarial relationship between faculty members and the university administration. But we must be vigilant to make sure that the administration consults the Association on all matters which affect the terms and conditions of employment of faculty

members, even though the law does not compel it to do so. Otherwise we may find ourselves being badly treated, even inadvertently, to such an extent that there will be strong pressure for certification.

*David Hitchcock, Chair
Academic Affairs*



Visiting the UK?

Spending a Research Leave There? If so, the Academic Relations Unit, Canadian High Commission, London would like to hear from you.

The Academic Relations Unit promotes teaching, research, and publication about Canada in the United Kingdom, and academic linkages with the United Kingdom. Together with the British Association for Canadian Studies, they offer speaking and other opportunities for visiting Canadian academics, and contact with over 300 Canadianists in nearly 100 UK universities.

Please write, fax or e-mail to: Michael Hellyer, Academic Relations Officer, Canadian High Commission, 1 Grosvenor Square, London W1X 0AB; Telephone: 011 44 171 258 6691; FAX: 011 44 171 258 6474; e-mail: michael.hellyer@ldn02.x400.gc.ca.



Best Wishes to Retiring MUFA Members

We wish those members who retired on July 1, every happiness and look forward to seeing them at the annual luncheon in their honour (this year on October 27), hosted jointly by the Presidents of the University and the Faculty Association.

Roy Adams - Human Resources & Labour Relations

Ann Beckingham - Nursing

Luis Branda - Biochemistry

William Chandler - Political Science

Tae Hoe Choe - Mathematics & Statistics

Sam Cioran - Modern Languages

Mo Dokainish - Mechanical Engineering

Derek Ford - Geography

Art Heidebrecht - Civil Engineering

Jocelyn Hezekiah - Nursing

Jim Johnson - Economics

John Lamont - Obstetrics & Gynecology

Brian Latto - Mechanical Engineering

Wei-Ko Lu - Materials Science

S. Brian McCann - Geography

Allan McFarlane - Psychiatry

G. Rolfe Morrison - Psychology

David Pengelly - Medicine

Dennis Psutka - Family Medicine

Graham Roebuck - English

Alex Rosa - Mathematics & Statistics

Michael Ross - English

Cesar Rouben - French

Joseph Sigman - English
Don Sprung - Physics & Astronomy
Carl Stager - Physics & Astronomy
Bill Truscott - Management Science
Ron Vince - Art, Drama & Music

Letter to the Editor

The following letter was received in response to Rhoda Howard's report on the UBC Conference regarding Academic Freedom and the Inclusive University which appeared in the May 1997 MUFA Newsletter (Volume 23.7)

I wish that Rhoda Howard were more precise in her use of at least one adjective. In her otherwise factual and even-handed *Newsletter* article, she characterizes the Society for Academic Freedom & Scholarship as "notorious", but she does not specify those groups among whom this notoriety is achieved. The failure to specify leaves the perhaps unintended impression that, in her opinion, SAFS is "notorious" among all right-thinking people, including Rhoda Howard.

It was less than four years ago that the previous NDP government in Ontario tried, unilaterally, to impose a policy of "zero tolerance" of "negative environments" in university classrooms. Dr. Howard and your readers should be reminded that there were exactly two organizations that objected to this restriction on freedom of speech: one was the "notorious" SAFS and the other, to its great credit, was MUFA. There was not a peep out of any university administration, including our own, nor out of any other faculty association, nor out of any civil rights group, nor out of any of the organizations that supposedly represent the interests of academics in the corridors of power.

Fortunately, the ill-conceived policy was aborted along with the NDP government. But the affair provided me with the motivation to join both SAFS and MUFA, organizations that evidently were particularly committed

to the defence of freedom of expression in general, academic freedom in particular. It is thus a little disturbing to find a member of the current MUFA Executive commenting in a seemingly pejorative way on an organization that in my opinion deserves much more support among academics than it gets.

To my way of thinking, academic freedom should be a cornerstone of the policy of any faculty association; thus if SAFS is "notorious", MUFA should also be, since many of their policies should be closely linked. So I find myself wondering: notorious among whom? Notorious among those opposed to academic freedom? Notorious among those who make specious arguments to justify special privileges for special groups? Notorious among those who think comfort in the classroom is more important than argument, discussion, fact or scholarship? Notorious among those who want government to regulate every detail of our lives, including what we say and think?

If Rhoda Howard meant any of these things, then I wonder why she did not say so. If not, then what did she mean?

*Bill Smyth
Computer Sciences & Systems*

The Whidden Lectures 1997

**Elizabeth Loftus
YOU MUST REMEMBER THIS**

Illusions of Memory

Thursday, November 13, 1997
8:00 p.m., Ewart Angus Centre
Health Sciences Centre 1A1

Memory and Its Discontents

Friday, November 14, 1997
8:00 p.m., Ewart Angus Centre
Health Sciences Centre 1A1


Admission is free; no tickets are required. Visitors are advised that parking space on campus in the evenings is limited, and they should leave ample time to find parking before the lecture begins.





Challenge for Faculty Associations

[Below is an article by Norma Wieland, a member of the Salaries and Economic Benefits Committee at UBC. The article is reprinted, with the approval of the author, from the Faculty Association of the UBC Newsletter, May 28, 1997 (Volume 30, No. 4).]

The challenges facing faculty unions and associations were the focus of a number of sessions at the Conference on Collective Bargaining in Higher Education held in New York April 14-16, 1997. Panel after panel and speaker after speaker returned to certain themes which seem to be common to most post-secondary institutions in Canada and the United States. The themes revolve around the following areas:

 The increasing number of temporary and part-time employees who are replacing full-time faculty. These employees are presented with ever-increasing work loads with no corresponding increase in pay. They are often hired to teach one course so that bargained pay scales, benefits and other protections which they would normally have as full-time teachers can be denied them. The fact that they are hired for such brief periods affects the continuity and consistency of programmes in many departments.

 The loss of a faculty voice in the running of the university. Too often administrations "go where the money is" without regard to how the quality of education will be affected or how the autonomy of the university will ultimately be undermined if donors "call the shots." The traditional role of the university Senate has been eroded (and at some new universities here in BC, disposed of completely).

 The importance of establishing the intellectual property rights of faculty over educational materials, particularly those which are electronically produced, as well as of ensuring that academic control of educational technology remains in the hands of academics.

It is the challenge of faculty associations and unions to fight to protect both educational quality and the rights of their members. It is also the challenge of our members to become involved, to express their concerns and to be vigilant. The time has passed when professors could concentrate only on teaching and research and let the rest take care of itself.

The strength of our voice depends on the strength of your commitment. We should not accept the disrespectful attitude towards faculty which shows itself in the unreasonable job conditions for some of our members, the erosion of our voice in the running of the university or the failure of the administration to budget for a Career Advancement Plan.

In these matters, bargaining from a position of strength is obviously preferable to bargaining from one of weakness. We must be up to the challenge if faculty associations are to survive.



We've all heard that a million monkeys banging on a million typewriters will eventually reproduce the entire works of Shakespeare.

Now, thanks to the Internet, we know this is not true.

Prof. R. Silensky
California University



Technical University of BC

At its meeting of 17 September, the Executive approved two letters protesting the establishment of the Technical University of British Columbia in its present form. Bill 30 of the B.C. legislature, which passed third reading in July 1997, provides for the establishment of a "technical university" in the Fraser Valley at Cloverdale. In contravention of national norms, the university will do away with the role of an independent senate and with academic tenure. The governance of the university will be in the hands of an appointed and elected board, whose mandate will be, in the words of the Act, "to create strong links with business and labour and develop programs that are relevant to, and at the forefront of, industrial and professional initiative." The board also has the power, under a section of its constitution, to fire a member of the teaching staff for engaging in unpopular or undesirable research, or for teaching in a way objectionable to the board. Recently retired Executive Director of CAUT Donald Savage writes that "the new legislation allows for political control and interference in the operation of the new university....It denies any significant role to the academic staff whose expertise are the key to the operations of a university and the guarantors of its quality. It permits outside business and labour interests to dictate the curriculum and the research work of faculty without any checks or balances to ensure that the public interest is served." Our letters of protest appear below. For more details on the issue, please consult the article in the current issue of the *CAUT Bulletin*.

The Honourable Paul Ramsey
Minister of Education, Skills and Training
Government of British Columbia

Dear Sir:

The legislation that established the Technical University of British Columbia contains provisions that profoundly compromise accepted principles of academic freedom. On behalf of the McMaster University Faculty Association I am writing to express our disapproval of the legislation, and to urge that you and your government colleagues immediately take steps to eliminate the objectionable provisions.

Yours truly,
Catherine Beattie, President

Mr. Ron Dickson
Chair, Interim Governing Board
Technical University of British Columbia
Ste. 1280, 13401-108th Avenue
Surrey, British Columbia V3T 5T3

Dear Mr. Dickson:

Academic freedom is an essential feature of a university and its protection a particular responsibility of those who are directly involved in the governance of universities. On behalf of the McMaster University Faculty Association I urge you, in your capacity as Chair of the Interim Governing Board, to find means by which to make the Technical

University of British Columbia into a legitimate university, and failing that to resign.

Yours truly,
Catherine Beattie, President