

THE UWFA NEWS

Message from the President

By Pauline Pearson, UWFA President

The summer was a trying one for many Members, given the sheer number of moves and the uncertainty that often surrounded the timing and the details of space management. With the middle of the term rapidly approaching as I write this, I hope that everyone has settled into the fall semester.

First, let me start by thanking those Members who have offered me their kind words and encouragement. Since taking on the position of UWFA President in May, I have been quite busy meeting with Members as well as the Employer. The former has tended to be more rewarding than the latter. It is great to see that the high energy levels and engagement that served us so well during the job action preparations continue. Meetings with the Employer have been cordial and have resulted in guidance for Members on a number of issues involving promotion applications and student evaluations of teaching. Dr. Axworthy has agreed to meet with faculties to discuss vacancy management at the University of Winnipeg. Please watch for the invitation to your faculty and plan to attend this important meeting.

The year promises to be busy for UWFA. Thank you to all those Members who have volunteered for UWFA committees, Senate committees, the many decanal search committees, and faculty caucus. We do not currently have a grievance officer working with the Association. This fall, we will offer grievance officer training to individuals interested in this process and still have some room available for anyone who is interested. In addition, we are currently preparing for collective bargaining of two agreements that expire in 2012—one for the Collegiate and one for the Contract Academic Staff. There will be many opportunities for Member input during preparations and negotiations. If you are in one of these bargaining units, I urge you to attend the planning meetings this fall and to bring issues to our attention. If you have suggestions for improvements to the collective agreement, please e-mail or call Lisa McGifford or me.

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The UWFA News is also available online at www.uwfa.ca/uwfa-news.



Home Sweet Home?
3C70, the new office space for
some Contract Academic Staff

For more on the life of a Contract Academic Staff Member, see p. 3

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In addition, we are planning to have CAUT provide training sessions on collective bargaining. If you are interested in understanding the process and potentially playing an active role in the process in the next few years (the Regular Academic Staff collective agreement expires in 2013), there is still time to sign up!

The UWFA Newsletter will continue to provide an essential line of communication with and among members. Tracy Whalen and the Communications Committee are considering the role that the UWFA website and social media may play in our communications strategy. Submissions for the quarterly newsletter or any announcements or suggestions for the website should be sent to Tracy. The Membership Committee under the guidance of Peter Ives has implemented a mentorship program. If you are interested in having or being a mentor, please contact Peter. Last but not least, Hugh Grant and Marissa Dudych are currently planning the social event of the season on Thursday, October 27 in the Atrium of the Richardson Science Building to welcome new faculty. I hope to see many familiar faces and get the opportunity to meet members of the faculty, both new and returning, at this gala event.

So, you are a member of the DC Pension Plan...

Hans Werner, Pension Trustee, UWFA appointment

The University of Winnipeg's Pension Plan is a trustee pension plan, which means it is governed by an independent Trustee Board with members appointed by various stakeholder groups—the campus unions, the University, retirees, and external members. The Plan has two parts, a defined benefit component, and a defined contribution part. What follows focuses on DC Plan members.

What is important to think about if you are a DC Plan member?

Risk. In a DC Plan the only part that is subject to a formula is the contribution level of the members and the employer. As a DC Plan member you absorb the risk of how much growth there will be over your working life. You should either be knowledgeable, or seek financial advice to become knowledgeable, about how much risk you are comfortable with and how much risk is inherent in various investment alternatives.

Fund Mix. As a DC Plan member you have a group of Mutual Funds to choose from. It is a fact that most members remain in the default plan. There is nothing particularly wrong with that choice, if it is made deliberately. The Pension Trustees have no inside information that suggests the default fund will be the best for you. After you have become knowledgeable about the risk inherent in the various funds and your sensitivity to risk, make an informed choice.

Pay Attention. There is no guaranteeing how large your retirement fund will be, so you must pay attention. The Board of Trustees has worked hard to provide plan members with a reasonable selection of funds and has engaged a provider that offers reasonable services in the form of a website and information sessions. Keep abreast of your choices and change them as the markets evolve and you become older. It can make quite a difference!

A Struggle for Legitimacy – and Voicemail

Tracy Whalen, UWFA Communications Officer

They're teachers and lawyers, provincial employees and Ph.D.-holding faculty who haven't found full-time employment. They're former faculty members and graduate students. We've historically called them Contract Faculty (CF), but CAUT prefers the term Contract Academic Staff (CAS) to refer to a Member who is hired on a per course or limited term basis under the terms of the collective agreement.

In "casual" conversation (so to speak) here on campus, I've heard CAS teaching figures ranging from 20% to 60%, depending on the department or faculty. Contract Academic Staff bring particular kinds of expertise to our university; there are legitimate and fair ways these Members can contribute to academic life. That said, they should not be exploited or over-used. CAUT maintains that they "are often poorly paid, have little or no benefits, no job security and no academic freedom. This casualization has serious implications not only for Contract Academic Staff, but for students, their Regular Academic Staff colleagues, and the university system as a whole" (<http://www.caut.ca/pages.asp?page=212>). CAUT opposes the increasing casualization of academic work and actively supports fairness and the equal treatment of all academic staff.

University of Winnipeg Contract Academic Staff are not well paid, comparatively speaking. If you are a CAS Member at the University of Manitoba, your pay for a 3 credit hour course (effective September 1, 2010 to August 31, 2011) is **\$4,796.40**. If you teach on contract at Brandon University (and are not on strike, of course), you receive 10% of the floor salary for Lecturer, which according to the April 1- March 31 2011 pay scale is **\$5, 101.00** for a 3 credit hour course. If the University of Winnipeg had this same agreement, CAS Members would right now be receiving **\$4,641.00** per 3 credit hour course.

Instead, they receive **\$3,773.00** plus an additional lump sum of \$202.00; that's a total of **\$3, 975.00** per half course (\$7,546 and a \$404.00 lump sum

per 1.0 FCE). According to the latest CAUT figures, University of Winnipeg contract faculty are the lowest paid in the country. Last Friday, as I was walking on the BUFA picket line in front of the Rice Building, I struck up a conversation with a sessional instructor from Brandon University who lives in Winnipeg. She had looked into teaching at the University of Winnipeg, but once she saw the salary scale and did some quick calculations, she discovered that she was better off commuting to Brandon to teach.

I think it's safe to say that many of us on campus have faced (or are still facing) uncertainty, upheaval and confusion in terms of office space, but CAS Members have faced particular challenges in this regard. According to the collective agreement, the CAS Member shall be provided with "access to private meeting space in order to meet with students" along with access to a telephone (with voicemail), the internet, and lockable storage. One Member I spoke with has no phone and as a result had to list the department office number on course outlines and communicate with students primarily by e-mail or face-to-face. In 3C12 (the former room for CAS members), there was a long line of lockable cabinets installed, but they were lined up against the wall with no notice of any kind. "That's a huge part of the problem," this Member contends: "when stuff does finally happen, it happens in silence." 3C12 was also very public, with no private consultation area. The new room for CAS Members, 3C70, may be an improvement, but problems remain: the ceiling is high so the room echoes and the only private space is a small room that also houses the site's three computers, which makes for a busy area.

According to CAUT, "[t]he overuse and exploitation of Contract Academic Staff is one of the biggest challenges facing the academic profession." CAUT has joined with other organizations across Canada, the United States, and Mexico to organize Fair Employment Week, which runs from October 24-28, 2011. Stay tuned for information from UWFA about activities that week.

UWFA Thanks Students and UWSA for Support

Peter Ives, Chair, UWFA Membership Committee

On September 14, UWFA held a barbeque on the Spence Promenade to thank our wonderful students and the UWSA in particular for the incredible support they showed us last March when we were on the brink of a strike. As faculty members, we were all concerned about how a possible strike would affect our students. We worried they may perceive our decision to strike as selfish or disruptive of their lives and education. So we were overwhelmed when student after student showed their support. They understood that our struggle was also about their education and that they, too, wanted a fairer deal for us. The UWSA was particularly supportive, informing students about the issues and what would happen were the strike to take place. Wendy Josephson, our chief negotiator, told me that the level of student support was very important at the bargaining table. None of us took our strike vote lightly and so it was extra

meaningful that students did not think narrowly in terms of the immediate problems that a strike would have inevitably involved. Instead, they were quick to understand the larger significance for the University as an institution of education, research and excellence.

As a small token of our appreciation, we organized the barbeque (with a great deal of help from the UWSA, who happen to own barbeques, tables and the like). While we ran out of the free veggie and hot dogs after serving almost 400, we all had a great time listening to the musical stylin's of James and the Giants. Many UWFA Members signed a giant thank you card that we presented to UWSA. UWFA volunteers set up, grilled and served—and then quickly cleaned up as a rain storm punctuated the event. I'd also like to thank the ten fabulous UWFA volunteers for helping organize the event.



UWFA Volunteers dish out lunch for students at the Student Appreciation Barbeque

Opportunities Missed

Mike McIntyre, UWFA Communications Committee Member

On April 20 the UWFA Executive invited me to join them in meeting with members of the administration including Dr. Axworthy. A principal objective of the meeting was to consider the need for improved communication between different segments of the University of Winnipeg community. It is this last word, “community,” that is all important. Community is, after all, central to what the University represents to the thousands of graduates who remember their time here with a deep and abiding affection. It was community that we experienced as our students supported us so firmly and so generously during bargaining. It is community that is central to the national ratings of undergraduate programs where we regularly excel. It is community that is evident in the generous giving that occurred in the recently completed capital campaign.

Our community is, however, threatened in many ways by the historic underfunding of the University. Class size, which has grown to the point that faculty know fewer and fewer of our students, is but one example. At the April 20 meeting, we discussed the historic underfunding and the possibility that we could speak of it with one voice – students, faculty, staff, and administration. The looming provincial election seemed to provide a particularly opportune time to raise the issue and to underscore the political implications of the underfunding. Assurances were made that communication was a high priority and would be improved.

On July 16, John McFerran’s interview with Dr. Axworthy appeared in the *Winnipeg Free Press*. When asked about the challenges of remaining competitive, Dr. Axworthy made oblique mention of historic underfunding and remarked

“One of the biggest issues we’re up against is that we are a regulated industry. We’re told what we can raise by tuition and we’re subject to government grants that are based solely on historical increments instead of metrics. As a result, it’s a constant challenge for universities to stay competitive on salaries and the level of benefits and opportunities for development we can offer.”

This is all true; however, details about the real human consequences of underfunding might have figured much more prominently. When McFerran asked about the “people practices” that would be affected by our struggle to stay competitive, Dr. Axworthy replied as follows:

“This year, we’re planning on a \$4-million vacancy management reduction by exercising

better timing of all new and replacement hiring. Naturally, this puts extra pressure on faculty and staff who have to pick up part of that workload until we sort things through and we are mindful of the potential problems this can create in terms of additional stress and sick leave or other productivity issues.”

As we know, on July 20 Pauline Pearson expressed her surprise that she first learned of this policy by reading the newspaper. There are several additional aspects of this response that are noteworthy.

First is the fact that vacancy management is historically a normal part of budgeting that pales compared to certain other aspects of our fiscal situation. A “people practice” required by our situation is that we shall continue to ask our students to pay a disproportionately large share of the costs of their education. A “people practice” that derives from our situation is that University employees will continue to be paid less than similarly qualified individuals working at other provincial institutions. The list can go on and on. For me, the most troubling aspect of Dr. Axworthy’s response was that it assumed a zero-sum perspective. Vacancy management has been with us for years. It does not seem to me to be the most compelling consequence for “people practices” that our budgetary situation requires. When budgets are discussed in any public venue the real human costs and the funding inequities from which they spring should be front and center.

The April 20 meeting suggested that all segments of the University would enter into dialogue on what is our most striking community interest: historic underfunding. This conversation hasn’t occurred and the compelling political consequences of our situation have not been aired. For example, I’m not sure that during the election any politician would want to explain how charging some citizens more for a service than others was not in some way discriminatory – especially in ridings in which our students are especially numerous. Operating within a zero-sum framework is destructive. It attacks the community that is the University’s greatest strength. The University under Dr. Axworthy has made astonishing progress in building a campus where our community’s needs are being much more broadly and adequately met. Raising capital is a much more likely fund-raising objective for a President than raising operating revenue. The political will to increase operating in a way that addresses inequity will require many raised voices. I believe that we need to communicate in ways that will allow us collectively to be seen as an integral, undivided community with the will to insist upon justice.

Travel Health Exclusions

Some UWFA Members have tried to make benefits claims recently only to find that they were ineligible for various reasons. While this information is available on the University of Winnipeg HR website, we thought it would be useful to print it here, too, so that Members do not have an unpleasant and unexpected response to a travel, disability, or insurance claim.

You and your dependents are NOT eligible for benefits under the Travel Health Plan if:

You are retired.

Travel outside Manitoba is undertaken for educational purposes.

Travel outside Manitoba is for the purpose of obtaining medical treatment.

You are beyond age 70 (First of the month following attainment of age 70). If you continue in active employment beyond this date, limited travel health coverage is available under the Extended Health Plan

Travel outside Manitoba is for a period in excess of 90 days, or a period in excess of 12 months if traveling outside Manitoba on approved sabbatical leave.

Persons traveling against medical advice.

Charges associated with the required confinement due to childbirth and delivery, in the event that any portion of travel outside your province of residence falls after the 36th week of gestation.

All travel health benefits shall be considered eligible only on submission of certification by the attending Physician that the services were for emergency treatment.

Benefits and Age Restrictions/Regulations

For those UWFA Members who work beyond the age of 65, the information from HR below should be helpful:

Age 65

Long Term Disability ends

Life insurance is reduced by 50%

Note: Life insurance ended for those employees who attained their Normal Pension Commencement Date (age 65) prior to January 1, 2009.

Age 70

End of Travel Health Insurance

Life insurance ends on the first of the month following attainment of age 70 for employees who attain Normal Pension Commencement Date (age 65) on or after January 1, 2009.

Age 71

Pension payments must commence no later than December 1 even if employment continues.

New and Returning Faculty Party

UWFA is having a cocktail party to welcome new faculty and introduce them to returning faculty.

Come to the new Science Complex Atrium on October 27 from 4.30 to 7.00. For a \$5 ticket, you'll get one free alcoholic beverage, hors d'oeuvre, an entry in the door prize draw, and, naturally, the sparkling wit of your colleagues. For more information or to buy a ticket, contact Hugh Grant (Economics) or Marissa Dudych (uwfa@uwinnipeg.ca, 786-9430).

Tickets are only on sale until Oct. 24, so don't wait! See you on the 27th!

Mark Your Calendar!

There will be a UWFA General Membership Meeting on **Tuesday, December 6 at 10.00 am in 4M47.** All Members are welcome to attend.

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<http://www.uwfa.ca>

<http://www.twitter.com/>

About the UWFA News

The UWFA News is compiled and published by the UWFA Communications Committee. The Committee is comprised of Tracy Whalen, Allen Mills, Peter Ives, Laurence Broadhurst, Andy Park, Jane Barter-Moulaison, Mike McIntyre, Roberta Gottschalk, and Marissa Dudych. For more information on the UWFA News, please contact Tracy Whalen at t.whalen@uwinnipeg.ca.

The UWFA News accepts submissions from University of Winnipeg Faculty Association members on issues of interest. Unless otherwise stated, the opinions expressed are those of the author(s) and not necessarily of the Association or its Executive Council.