

faculty times

UWOFA.CA

Unity

Collective Action

Ideas

Solidarity

Research

Strength

**Collective
action plays
key role in
academic life**

**Support
for LUFA
colleagues**

**Survey sheds
light on needs
of equity-
seeking
members**

Faculty Times is an official publication of the University of Western Ontario Faculty Association

Phone: 519-661-3016 • uwofa@uwo.ca • www.uwofa.ca



@uwofa1



/uwofa



Contents

President’s column

Collective action plays key role
in academic life **3**

News

Survey sheds light on needs
of equity-seeking
members..... **5**

Announcement

Apply for UWOFA's Covid
Relief Fund **7**

News

Support colleagues
at Laurentian..... **8**

Faculty Times is an official publication of the
University of Western Ontario Faculty Association.
Articles do not necessarily reflect the views
of UWOFA.

JAMES COMPTON, editor
jcompto3@uwo.ca

VANESSA FRANK, editor
vbrown5@uwo.ca

ISSN# 1206-2529



8

**I support
LUFA!**

LUFA
lufappul.ca



The University of Western Ontario Faculty Association
1201 Western Road, Elborn College, Room 2120

Phone: 519 661-3016 Fax: 519 661-3946
email: uwofa@uwo.ca • www.uwofa.ca

@uwofa1 /uwofa

President's Column



Collective action plays key role in academic life

By Beth MacDougall-Shackleton, UWOFA President

UWOFA's membership is not cut from whole cloth. It includes people with a diversity of appointment types, lengths of service, demographics and political views. Although each of us may have somewhat different priorities, ultimately academic staff unionize because we share a set of core values in support of teaching, research and collegial governance – the three pillars of the academic mission.

We support academic freedom and equity because we know that post-secondary education is a public good and that universities are agents of social progress and fair labour conditions. Our ability to advance these shared values is particularly

apparent during negotiating years, but the strength of our solidarity also applies during turbulent times like today. As the world responds to the Covid-19 pandemic, the importance of unity and a common purpose has never been clearer. Closer to home, recent events at Western have illustrated this theme.

Just over a year ago, UWOFA learned that the administration was pursuing negotiations with Navitas, an Australian developer of international pathway colleges owned by a multi-billion dollar private equity firm. Privately-owned pathway colleges such as Navitas generate profits for shareholders by using

the university's name and reputation to recruit international students who do not meet the university's first-year entrance standards.

Students of pathway colleges are charged very high international tuition and fees, and are often misled as to their chances of being admitted to the university itself. For their part, the colleges use not only the brand and reputation of the university but also libraries, classrooms and other publicly funded infrastructure. Accordingly, private pathway colleges and their role in corporatizing public education have been criticized by faculty associations and student groups alike.

President's Column



This is a powerful lesson that collective action and membership mobilization play key roles in the collegial governance of the university, beyond the context of bargaining a collective agreement.

At UWOFA's spring 2020 Membership Meeting, Navitas was the topic of lively discussion. Members expressed dismay about the company's recruiting tactics and the further commodification of international students. They also criticized the company's use of precariously employed non-unionized instructors, and the implications these working conditions have for academic freedom and quality instruction.

Even in the midst of a global pandemic, with chaos in our professional and personal lives, our members mobilized to oppose the Navitas deal. Over the spring, summer and fall a series of motions opposing private pathway colleges were proposed, voted on, and overwhelmingly passed at Faculty Councils. By January 2021, the motions had passed at six of Western's eleven Faculty Councils -- always by overwhelming margins and with remarkably high voter turnout. At the January meeting of Senate, the administration acknowledged the opposition of the academic community and stated that the Navitas file was closed. This is a powerful lesson that

collective action and membership mobilization play key roles in the collegial governance of the university, beyond the context of bargaining a collective agreement.

Our members have also been united in holding our Chancellor accountable for disregarding public health guidelines and pursuing non-essential travel overseas. News that Linda Hasenfratz -- a member of the Ford government's vaccine rollout task force -- had embarked on a Barbados vacation at the height of the pandemic hit like a bombshell at Western. For nearly a year, faculty, staff and students were asked to make sacrifices to their working and learning conditions. Some, in good faith attempts to respect the travel advisory, had said their final goodbyes to loved ones over online video links.

Faculty, librarians and archivists were appalled by the Chancellor's actions, and by the lack of meaningful consequences imposed by the Board of Governors. UWOFA's call for Hasenfratz to resign generated enormous solidarity and support from our members, students,

other employee groups, alumni, and Londoners. The scandal culminated in Western's Chief Marshall of Convocation resigning his post in principled protest of the Chancellor's conduct.

Convocation is a ritual designed to unite the university community. Time will tell whether the Chancellor will be able to preside convincingly over this event, given the damage her hypocritical conduct has caused to the office. But ironic as it may seem, in a way this sordid affair has indeed united us. We can all agree that we should aspire to be a place where nobody considers themselves to be above the public good. ■



Beth MacDougall-Shackleton is president of UWOFA

News



Survey sheds light on needs of equity-seeking members

A recent survey of UWOFA members provides a clearer picture of equity-seeking groups on campus.

UWOFA surveyed members in November to gather anonymized data on equity-seeking groups with which members may identify. The responses highlighted potential barriers to employment opportunities that may be experienced by groups beyond those already designated by the federal Employment Equity Act (women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities, and people of colour). The data will be used to inform recommendations on how to update the university's Employment Equity Guide.



Wendy Pearson, a women's studies professor, is one of UWOFA's representatives on

the Joint Employment Equity Committee, which is working on updating the guide. Pearson said it is important that the terminology in the guide be updated to specifically mention equity-seeking groups that go beyond the four federally protected categories. For example, in terms of gender, two survey respondents identified as non-binary or agender; one person identified as two-spirit; and one identified as a transgender man.

"That means there are people in the Ontario Human Rights Code protected category around gender identity and gender expression. But because we focus so heavily on the four federally mandated groups, we don't actually know who else is around who deserves equity and should be being protected in terms of equity," Pearson explained.

Terminology emerged as a notable issue in the survey for Treena Orchard, co-chair of UWOFA's Equity Committee

which worked with Pearson on the survey. The vast majority of the 226 respondents did not answer the question "What terminology do you prefer when referring to yourself?" Only 30 people indicated their preference, while 196 skipped ahead to the next question.



Treena Orchard

"Very often people might want to use more than one terminology," Orchard said. "Many equity-seeking groups often feel like they are being forced to choose, to fit in a box, or just check other, which is beyond vague and really oppressive and it really makes them not included and contributes to the process of erasure."

Respondents were also asked about disability, chronic health and mental health conditions. Of those who have a



Many equity-seeking groups often feel like they are being forced to choose, to fit in a box, or just check other, which is beyond vague and really oppressive and it really makes them not included and contributes to the process of erasure.

– Treena Orchard

disability or health condition, 24 said the condition emerged or changed since the start of their career at Western.

The updated Employment Equity Guide is expected to be available in July for the 2021-2022 academic year. It is Pearson's hope that everyone will be able to find themselves in it for appointments and tenure and promotion processes. Pearson is also using the survey responses to inform her work on the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) subgroup of Western's next Strategic Plan.

"The survey is just a small step towards thinking about how we might find out the answers that we need to know if we're actually going to deal with EDI in a knowledgeable fashion, not just an aspirational fashion, but in terms of actually knowing who's here and what they need," Pearson said.

"I think there's a lot of promise for taking (the data) to another level – maybe doing a qualitative component," Orchard added. "There are a lot of different ways that we can use this as a springboard to enrich our understanding of these really important issues." ■

Join Queer Caucus at Western

The Queer Caucus at Western was founded in 2008 by Greta Bauer (Epidemiology and Biostatistics), Susan Knabe (FIMS and Women's Studies) and WG Pearson (Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies). Its purpose is to provide an intellectual and social community for LGBTQ2I people at Western, with emphasis on academic work, primarily. However, it has also functioned as a social space, including "Purple Pansy Teas" at the Pride Library and "Beers for Queers" at the Grad Club. Members who wish to organize social events are welcome to do so, but the primary work of the Queer Caucus is to promote relevant talks and events dealing with queer and trans issues and, in concert with the Sexuality and Gender Research Group, to organize and run Queer Research Day, which takes place on the third Wednesday of April every year. 2021 should be the twelfth QRD, but the pandemic meant that QRD 2020 had to be cancelled. We have in the past also sponsored talks at Western with visiting speakers from as far afield as the University of Wollongong in Australia.

The Queer Caucus, like the Western Caucus on Women's Issues, is an unofficial group that has no funding or official space on campus and is run entirely by volunteers. It is open to faculty, staff, and graduate students and membership is free. Anyone interested in joining the group can do so by emailing queer-caucus@uwo.ca.

Announcement

Apply for UWOFA's Covid Relief Fund

UWOFA faculty members holding a limited-duties appointment or a standing appointment are encouraged to apply for UWOFA's Covid Relief Fund.

Eligible members may apply for an amount up to \$500. The funding shall cover teaching costs related to the purchase of hardware, software, home office equipment or furniture, and the increased cost of Internet usage since the beginning of the pandemic. For example, if you paid \$65 for Internet before the pandemic began and now your bill is \$80, the extra \$15 is an eligible expense.

In order to support as many contract faculty members as possible, eligible members can apply for funding for items purchased anytime between March 14, 2020 and May 14, 2021. The deadline to apply has been extended to May 14 at 6 p.m.

Visit www.uwofa.ca/covid-relief-fund-uwofa-contract-faculty-members for more information about the fund and the application process.

To date, the fund has supported 77 members. Visit www.uwofa.ca/determining-if-you-are-uwofa-member to determine if you are a member.

Individual & Family Counselling Services Available

UWOFA members can access individual and family counselling services through Western's Employee and Family Assistance Plan.

Visit uwofa.ca/individual-family-counselling for more information.

News

Support colleagues at Laurentian

The Laurentian University Faculty Association (LUFA) is pressing the provincial government to stop insolvency proceedings currently engulfing the university.

As part of its letter-writing campaign LUFA urges the province to provide more funding to secure the future sustainability of Laurentian.

According to LUFA, “the root source of Laurentian University’s financial problems is a lack of transparent and accountable institutional governance that has resulted in arbitrary, unilateral decisions being made behind closed doors. The Laurentian University Faculty Association has repeatedly raised concerns about the secretive and non-consultative approach the university administration has taken to making important financial decisions. These decisions, combined with the steady erosion of public funding, have now put the future of Laurentian University, its programs, students’ educations, and jobs at risk.”

Consider supporting Laurentian’s academic community by joining LUFA’s campaign. Visit www.lufappul.ca to send a letter to Ross Romano, the provincial minister of Colleges and Universities.



You can also [send a letter](#) to the federal government asking it to assist through its support for Official Languages and Indigenous education, research and core operating funds. The federal government can show leadership by working with the provinces to develop and fund a plan for post-secondary education as it has for childcare, housing and health care.

Annual Meeting of Members

**Tuesday,
March 30, 2021
1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.**



Teleconference. [Please click here for agenda and more information.](#)