

March 13, 2025

Amy Bryson
University Secretary

Via email
cc: Western Senators and Official Observers

Dear Ms Bryson,

The UWOFA Board of Directors stands behind our communications and will not be responding to the request for changes made in your letter of March 11, 2025. We were surprised by your letter and found it inappropriate. It demonstrates to us that the University Secretary does not understand the role of a union nor the proper and valued place of the academic community in university governance. Given the choice to share this letter with the Senate, rather than address any concerns directly with the UWOFA leadership, we can only assume that the intent is to make a political point. Such actions are inconsistent with the obligations of an impartial actor and can only be taken as a deliberate effort to reprimand and thereby undermine the members of the University Senate. We have set forth below a summary of our principal objections.

First, when the letter says that it is “problematic” for “UWOFA to appear to be interfering with the governance processes of the University,” it misunderstands what UWOFA is. The University of Western Ontario Faculty Association (UWOFA) is a certified trade union which represents 1,700 faculty, librarians, and archivists who are employed by The University of Western Ontario. We are a Member-run organization with an elected Board of Directors that is directed by our membership. It is critical to understand that unions, and therefore UWOFA, **are** their Members. As such, the letter you sent accuses Western **faculty, librarians and archivists** of interfering with the governance processes of their **own** University and objects to that interference. This is an unsettling attempt at disenfranchisement.

Second, and following from the first, UWOFA is not “interfering with the governance processes of the University” nor are we “spreading incorrect information that threatens to circumvent or prevent the Senate from doing its work.” We have published a frequently asked questions (FAQ) document in an attempt to fill the information vacuum on the topic of Navitas and respond to the expressions of concern and calls for information from among our ranks. In this FAQ we encourage faculty, librarians and archivists to **use the governance structures available to them** to express their concerns and their views - namely, their faculty councils and the Senate, through their elected, constituency-specific Senators.

It is troubling and confusing that the University Secretary should interpret calls to Western’s faculty, librarians, and archivists to debate motions at their councils/forums and communicate their concerns and views to Senators as ‘interference’ “circumvent[ing] the responsibility and authority of the Senate” and “the exercise by Senators of their responsibilities to the University.” This seems exactly in line with #9 of the [‘Responsibilities of a Senator and Senate Committee Members’](#) which your letter cites: “Communicate with constituents about the issues before Senate and raise any issues of concern.”

Third, nothing in the FAQ prevents Senators from exercising their own critical judgment in making decisions in the best interests of the University. Indeed, we simply **expect and assume** that in determining what is in the best interests of the University, Senators include as valid evidence the perspectives of their constituencies. It is also troubling that you take such pains in the letter to point out and reinforce the instances of power and control in the university governance system wherein Senators are isolated from the rank and file of the academic community. It is not respectful to discount the views of that community as “not objective” or “not in the best interests of the University.” As core members of the University, our advocacy is always focused toward its best interests.

You are correct that the mandate of UWOFA is to advance the professional interests of our past, present, and future membership. This includes taking action to defend the conditions of academic labour to enhance the teaching, professional practice, and research at Western. It includes advocating on issues of education and labour policy locally, provincially, and nationally to protect public education, the higher education sector, and the work and working conditions of academic staff. Academic matters are UWOFA matters. We also stand in solidarity with other campus unions and associations in protecting and promoting the interests of our entire Western community.

In your letter you “implore” the elected President of UWOFA to support good governance “by encouraging faculty and the broader Western community to educate themselves on the issues and support Senators in seeking information and exercising their responsibility to make independent, informed decisions in good faith in the best interests of the University.” We would argue that UWOFA is doing just that and refer you back to our FAQ, which will continuously reflect our independent information-seeking activities and analyses. Our responsibility to support good governance includes communicating to our membership the accelerated timelines which are being proposed by the Administration. These timelines will undoubtedly undermine the ability for all Senators to make independent and informed decisions in good faith.

Sincerely,

The UWOFA Board of Directors

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