



**SFUFA**

THE FACULTY ASSOCIATION OF SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

# SFUFA NEWS

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## Keeping the Wheels Turning: The President's Summer Report

Robert Hackett (Communication)  
SFUFA, President

Among the many things I've learned during 2008/09 while serving as your Association's President, two themes stand out.

First, expect the unexpected. The BC government's cuts to university operating budgets last year took the whole community by surprise. The struggle to restore funding diverted us from issues such as faculty workload, workplace climate, and governance that otherwise would have been higher on our agenda.

Second, if the wheels of academe turn slowly, the wheels of academic governance may be even slower; but they do turn. The anti-cutbacks campaign forged new and promising connections between faculty and other campus constituencies embodied in the SFU Community Coalition. In other ways too, SFUFA is making moving forward to improve our workplace. At the summer general meeting on June 25, I highlighted the following six dimensions of your Association's work over the past three months.

### Advocating for Public Higher Education

SFUFA has taken an active role as a public advocate for post-secondary education. In light of SFU's particularly vulnerable position relative to BC's 11 public universities, the Association felt compelled to intervene publicly in response to the budget cuts and did so in collaboration with CUFA BC. Since early April, SFUFA has worked with the SFU Community Coalition to co-sponsor an all-party candidates meeting prior to the BC

election. We also participated in the Coalition's "Envision Education" exercise on May 15, which aimed to forge a democratic vision of the university as a baseline for future collaborative campaigns. While I could not personally attend, it was by all accounts an excellent discussion attended by a healthy cross-section of campus constituencies. SFUFA has also sent letters of congratulation to the winning provincial candidates in SFU-area ridings, plus a general invitation to the new Minister of Advanced Education Moira Stilwell and the new opposition critic Dawn Black to correspond and meet with us.

### **Participating in University Policy Processes.**

In the wake of Faculty re-structuring, several **deans' searches** have occurred nearly simultaneously. Members have brought a number of concerns to us, on a range of issues, including inadequate notification and time for faculty input; confidentiality; the authority of the search committee Chair; and the interpretation of the two-term limit for deans (with some members further suggesting that it might be extended to Chairs as well, one of the governance issues that we plan to explore in the coming year). The Vice-President Academic has indicated that the procedures and policies for decanal searches and appointments are under review. In response, the SFUFA Executive prepared a memo with recommendations that is posted on our website.

A search is now underway for the **next president of SFU**. The Executive discussed and prepared a statement on the qualities and priorities that we hope characterizes the next incumbent, sent it to the Search Committee, and posted it on our website. While we have full confidence in the faculty representatives on that committee, we have sent a letter expressing our concern on one point – that the ad for the position does not require candidates to be academic colleagues.

SFUFA has also carefully reviewed the **Vice-President Academic's three-year plan to 2013** from the viewpoint of faculty rights, workload, and negotiated policies. The Executive discussed and prepared a memo for submission to the VP Academic, which is also on our website. One key concern is the need to recognize and support the library as a vital part of teaching and research, especially given the current fiscal climate. SFUFA Vice-President Hilmar Pabel has arranged a fact-finding meeting with the University Librarian, and this is an issue the Executive will be keeping an eye on.

Over the past year, I have actively **consulted with SFUFA members on Senate** about issues and positions. While acknowledging that Senate and SFUFA have different roles, I would like to see this kind of liaison and where appropriate, collaboration, continue. I also want to commend Senators Pavsek, Chapman, and Percival amongst others, for their active role in raising issues and asking questions at Senate, and to note reports of positive changes in the climate of discussion in Senate.

The work of the **Teaching and Learning Task Force** is clearly an important issue for SFUFA members and generated a great deal of discussion at the Summer General Meeting. I wish to thank those members serving on the task force for their participation

and openness to all ideas and critical comments raised at the meeting. The work of the task force is ongoing, and we should receive a full report with recommendations from the working groups shortly. We are promised serious consultation through the summer and early fall with a community forum later in September before the final report is produced for the Vice-President Academic. I encourage all SFUFA members to read and respond to the preliminary report when it becomes available.

Members raised a number of concerns, including the need to acknowledge that SFU has an abundance of good teachers, the fear that the task force recommendations will put more pressure on those most committed to teaching, and the potential cost of implementation. A suggestion was to cost all items and commit necessary resources up front to avoid further escalation of faculty workloads. The Executive was reminded that changes in workload are health and safety issues and should be acknowledged as such. (Indeed, all major organizational and re-structuring initiatives should arguably be required to include an analysis of workload and staffing implications.)

The recommendations from the Task Force's working groups will potentially address evaluation of teaching, require fundamental changes in LIDC, and move SFU to the cutting edge in terms of commitment to teaching. We have invited the task force to use the SFUFA newsletter to communicate with members.

Finally, at our regular **monthly consultations with the administration**, SFUFA has raised a number of issues – all those noted above, plus -- for example – Olympic security arrangements, support for different kinds of research at SFU and budget outlooks and impacts, including reductions in temporary teaching budgets.

### **Engaging with our Provincial and National Associations.**

CUFA/BC represents five universities: UBC, SFU, Victoria, Royal Roads and UNBC. Given that there are now 11 public universities in BC, at the April Council meeting, CUFA launched a re-visioning exercise to define its role in researching and advocating for public post-secondary education in this new provincial context.

The Distinguished Academic Awards are a CUFA highlight and were presented at the annual dinner in April. In addition to the Academic-of-the-Year and Lifetime-Achievement awards, CUFA will be adding an Early-Career-Achievement award. Please keep these three awards in mind and consider nominating SFU colleagues next year. (While SFU faculty did not win either of this year's awards, we have been very well represented over the years.)

CAUT's semi-annual Council was also held in April in Ottawa. I attended with SFUFA Executive-Director Doug Dorward. There were excellent panels and workshops on the federal government's misguided research funding policies, on how university administrations are dealing with (alleged) financial crises, and a lively debate on 'teaching-only' positions. But the main activity was electing the CAUT Executive and its

standing committees. There are now just two Executive members from western Canada and none from SFU. We will be seeking nominations for next year.

### **Service to Individual Members**

This vital aspect of SFUFA's role may be below the radar for those members who have not worked with our Associate ED Susan Stevenson and ED Doug Dorward. I want to acknowledge the huge workload they carry as the go-to people when you have questions about policy and procedures, including all kinds of leaves; or issues with administrators; or concerns about salary, tenure and promotion, including deferral and early tenure or promotion; or complaints about the criteria and timing of Professional Development Reimbursements, which many members are understandably gnashing their teeth over. For reasons that are not yet clear, we have had many more cases around tenure, promotion, and salary this year than is usually the case, and staff are watching for trends and assessing potential causes.

I also want to acknowledge the work of our Executive Assistant Jenny, who in the past year has brought an extraordinary level of efficiency to our office.

### **Negotiating the Framework Agreement**

In May, the SFUFA Economic Benefits Bargaining Advisory Committee attended a workshop with CAUT representatives and other CUFA/BC members. In the fall, the committee will survey members about their issues and priorities for bargaining. And yes, PDR is on the agenda!

The question is still open as to whether we could bargain more effectively under the rubric of BC's Labour Code, i.e. if we unionized (like 79% of our colleagues across Canada). This is potentially an option for the Executive and the membership to pursue. I do not believe there is a consensus on that right now, but it behooves us all to be as well informed as possible. To that end, I have posted a summary of some of the Canadian research on the impact of faculty unionization on the SFUFA website.

### **SFUFA's Internal Operations**

On July 24, we are holding a retreat for the SFUFA staff and Executive on planning and priorities, so that we have if not a Master plan, then at least a checklist of goals against which to assess our day-to-day activities. We are also creating an Advisory Council for SFUFA, comprising volunteer representatives from the different Faculties. The idea is to maintain a two-way information flow between the Association and its members, particularly in dealing with urgent situations such as the impact of budget constraints. The task is not onerous; beside gathering and communicating information with members of your Faculty, it essentially involves meeting with your colleagues from across the university once per semester to exchange information and discuss issues relating to our workplace. To date, we have at least 17 volunteers, and the number is growing. If you are interested in participating, please contact Doug Dorward.

As always, we welcome your input, and we invite you to become involved, whether through the Faculty Advisory Council, the Association's standing and ad hoc committees, or its Executive.

Finally, it has been a pleasure to serve as your President for the past year, and I wish all the best to your next President, Hilmar Pabel from History, to whom I pass the baton officially on September 1.

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## **SFU and Childcare Issues: the View from Academic Women**

**Catherine Murray (Communication)  
Academic Women, President**

This spring, Academic Women followed up on childcare issues two years after the 2007 strike at the SFU Childcare Society ( SFUCCS) to determine satisfaction with general service, and any continuing or pending issues. An earlier comparative benchmark study by the SFUCCS sustainability committee led by Nancy Forde had found SFU's support for childcare among the best at Canadian universities. Compared to others across the country, the SFU Childcare Society is a leader for its provision of infant care and for staying open when classes are not in session. And indeed, the follow-up survey of Academic Women members (some 300 professional women faculty and staff at SFU) determined overall a high level of satisfaction with the Society, but the survey also identified some brewing concerns for faculty with children.

In February, the Academic Women ad hoc Childcare Issues Working Group chaired by Maite Taboada, Linguistics, hosted a roundtable with faculty, staff, graduate students, and the president of SFUCCS to discuss these and other issues. Special note was taken of SFU's strong and continuing championship of childcare, and especially of the ongoing contribution of the Executive Directors' Salary and of another special contribution in 2008-2009 to cover \$60,000 in utilities. By stepping in – even in the early days of financial duress at SFU –the University enabled the Society to avoid raising fees. Denis Berube, a champion of SFUCCS, who was about to retire after a notable career in service in the Finance Department, provided a financial snapshot of SFU's ongoing subsidy to childcare, and recapped earlier proposals to put the Childcare Society on stable long-term financial footing by making it eligible for support from the Burnaby Mountain Trust Endowment. While this proposal was shelved at the time, a new 5-year agreement between SFU and the Society is in the final stages of negotiation. This agreement requires minor changes to the constitution at SFUCCS that are pending in the Fall of 2009.

SFUCCS is a separate not-for-profit society with obviously close ties to and reliance upon Simon Fraser University. The SFU administration has two seats on the Board of SFUCCS. The Executive Director of the Society also reports to SFU rather than to the SFUCCS Board, an arrangement that will be changed over time.

Other concerns include the opening and closing hours at SFUCCS that remain a problem for faculty and staff with unusual working hours. Another concern is wait lists and the need for faculty, staff and full time graduate students to be given priority and for there to be flexibility on waitlists to avoid penalties because of academic leaves. The Society's Board is undertaking a review of these matters and will report back in 2009/2010.

For faculty, the wait-list problem is leading to allegations of a bait-and-switch recruiting strategy. That is, new faculty members consider access to childcare a critical and persuasive factor in recruiting at this university, but when they arrive on campus, it can take over a year to get moved up in the waitlist. Concern was expressed that "departments are not aware this is tantamount to false advertising". Special access for new faculty recruitment to wait lists must be planned for, and more caution is needed to avoid promotional hype. For graduate students, inadequate access to TSSU childcare bursaries (some \$50,000 set aside annually by the university) creates a considerable barrier.

Inadequate awareness, short historical memory, and an apparent gulf in the perceived salience of the issue between faculty with children and those without remain big challenges in mobilizing on this issue within the SFU community. As well, the impact of the planned elementary school for UniverCity on the future of the Society is uncertain. A significant number of Academic Women are calling for some pro bono assistance to be thrown the way of SFUCCS to assist them in establishing their own endowment fund that would help them achieve a more sustainable financial base.

Regular meetings to improve the communication and cooperation between the SFU administration, SFUCCS, and other members of the SFU community were identified as a way to improve communication and cooperation among those with an interest in childcare issues.

There are other issues on the horizon for all faculty with children. The roundtable raised the issue of the impact of part-time status and parental leave amendments. Tenure and Promotion Committees are apparently (no pun intended) highly inconsistent in how they regard faculty who avail themselves of parental leave. Apparently, not everyone is aware of how important parental leaves are as a recruiting tool to foster long-term productivity and to establish SFU as an international leader. Finally, those with experience with the Tri-Councils wondered why SFU's professional development reimbursement appears out of phase in that it does not cover the child care costs necessary for travel. Gayle Meyers, Director of Academic Relations, has undertaken to look into this matter with Revenue Canada, and SFUFA is asked to consider it in the next round of negotiations.

Childcare issues concern us all, and annual updates on this critical issue should be provided by both SFUFA and Academic Women. Faculty should also be proactive in bringing their concerns with childcare to these organizations. I encourage you to let us know how well you are being served and what we can do to help keep SFU's support for child care among the best in the country.

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## YOUR EMPLOYEE AND FAMILY ASSISTANCE PLAN

Doug Dorward, Executive Director, SFUFA

Do you know that you have access to an Employee and Family Assistance Plan (EFAP) offered through an independent provider "Human Solutions?"

This plan provides access to confidential, short-term counseling for you and your family members for personal/psychological issues (anger, anxiety disorders, mood disorders, self-esteem, stress, and others) as well as marital/relationship counseling and counseling related to work issues (burnout, work relations, work stress.)

The EFAP also offers Plan Smart Services such as:

- Childcare and Parenting Support Services
- Elder and Family Care Advice
- Financial Advisory Service
- Legal Advisory Service
- Pre-Retirement Planning Service
- Smoking Cessation Program
- Nutritional Counseling
- Career Counseling

More detailed information on these services can be found on the SFUFA website at [www.sfufa.ca](http://www.sfufa.ca).

To book an appointment by phone, call 1-800-663-1142.

Be sure to tell the person you speak with about any special considerations you have in terms of the type of counselor you prefer to work with (for example: you prefer a male/female counselor, you want a psychologist with a Ph.D., you prefer someone older/younger than yourself, you want a Cognitive-Behavioral Therapist, etc.) They will work with you to try to find the best match for your particular needs.

If you have any feedback about the services provided, please contact Doug Dorward, SFUFA Executive Director at [doug\\_dorward@sfu.ca](mailto:doug_dorward@sfu.ca).

## FRASER INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE

The Faculty Association is interested in hearing from members about SFU's relationship with Fraser International College, which is due for review over the next year. If you have information or perspective to offer, and especially if you have direct interaction with FIC or its students (e.g. through supervising courses or teaching for FIC), we would appreciate having your assessment of the partnership with SFU. Please send your comments (and the nature of your relationship to/experience with FIC) to [sfufa@sfu.ca](mailto:sfufa@sfu.ca). Your comments will not be circulated beyond the staff and executive.

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### INVITE SFUFA TO A FACULTY MEETING?

Do faculty in your academic unit know what services the Faculty Association provides members? Are there questions of general interest relating to the Association you would like answered? Members of the SFUFA Executive and Association staff would be pleased to attend a faculty meeting to outline services, answer questions, and hear concerns. For more information or to arrange a visit, please contact [sfufa@sfu.ca](mailto:sfufa@sfu.ca).

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### NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Have a topic you'd like discussed, a question you'd like answered, or a contribution you'd like to make to the next newsletter? Please send me a message at [stevens@sfu.ca](mailto:stevens@sfu.ca).