



SFUFA

THE FACULTY ASSOCIATION OF SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

SFUFA NEWS

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EXPLORING CERTIFICATION UNDER THE BC LABOUR CODE: THE SFUFA SPRING GENERAL MEETING

Robert Hackett (Communication)
SFUFA, President

Mark Tuesday April 7, 2-4 pm in your calendar. In addition to the business of the annual and spring general meetings, we have two excellent guest speakers whose faculty associations have fairly recently become legally recognized as trade unions – albeit through different routes, and for different reasons. Our guests are University of BC Faculty Association President Liz Hodgson and Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) Vice-President Wayne Peters, an engineering professor who is currently Past-President of the University of Prince Edward Island Faculty Association, after serving four years as its president. They will discuss what difference it makes for their associations, and their members to be operating under the rubric of their respective province’s Labour Code.

Why is this question on our agenda now? In part, it fulfills a public commitment I made as a candidate for the SFUFA presidency in 2007 – viz., to open-mindedly explore the option of certification. I pledged to do so not as an end in itself, but as a potential legal tool to more effectively address other issues we care about such as salaries and benefits, workload, faculty influence in university policy-making, respectful relations in the workplace, fair treatment of equity-seeking groups, individual members’ complaints, and other aspects of our life as employees of a public university.

I have undertaken my own learning process regarding certification during my presidency. Through CAUT, I learned that historically Canadian professors' much-cherished academic freedom was not a gift handed down from benevolent governments or administrations, but a hard-fought prize won by faculty through mutual support and collective bargaining. I've also learned that once they have voted for certification, no faculty association's membership has voted to de-certify, even though the latter process is no more difficult. I observed that during the 1990s, a successful faculty organizing drive occurred at my old alma mater, Queen's University, which is arguably (if I may say so) one of the country's flagship academic institutions.

SFUFA's own research shows that apart from Alberta (which has a unique legal framework for Academic Staff Associations), the huge majority of faculty associations in Canada are already certified - all but two in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec and the Atlantic provinces collectively, 11 of 17 in Ontario, and eight of the eleven public universities we now have in BC. (Apart from SFU, Victoria and Northern BC have non-unionized associations.)

There must be some reason, I thought, why so many Canadian academics, professionals who pride themselves on independence, intellect and individualism have banded together under a legal rubric often stereotypically associated with blue collars, lunch buckets and picket signs. It seemed almost irresponsible not to revisit the question of certification, in a pragmatic, open-ended way, as SFUFA has done every decade or so.

In the spring of 2007 when I ran for election as SFUFA President Elect, there was less urgent need for a considered review of the costs and benefits of certification. That was before the provincial government's unexpected budget cuts last March, which have resulted at SFU in the termination of 30 faculty (and 50 other staff) positions, cuts to academic programs, and drastic reductions in temporary teaching budgets. At last summer's general meeting, and in a thread of emails since, some of our Association's members asked whether it was time to consider certifying. Even with the rhetorical promises of the just-released provincial budget, it appears we still face a near future of fiscal constraints, curriculum rationalization, programs with uncertain futures, and a difficult round of salary negotiations in 2010. In the wake of global economic recession and the long-term decline in post-secondary education funding throughout the continent, compounded in BC by a probable post-Olympics fiscal hangover, it is widely expected that the next round of negotiations will be very challenging indeed, regardless of the best intentions of our administration or the party label of the government in office.

Your SFUFA Executive has been discussing the question of certification for several months. In the fall we reviewed a memorandum prepared by our Executive Director, Doug Dorward, which outlined the process for certification and the possible advantages and disadvantages of doing so. Our discussion of that memo led to the decision to invite some speakers from unionized faculty associations to speak to our members at the spring general meeting.

Should we join the eight BC faculty associations already under the Labour Code?
Should we join in the tradition of mutual support with BC's public sector unions as we

bargain simultaneously for post-Olympic collective agreements? Would certification enable us more effectively to address other issues we care about? What really *are* the costs and benefits?

The April 7 general meeting is an opportunity to hear from colleagues who have already been down that road and to raise your questions and concerns. I encourage all members – those with firm opinions on certification and those who have not made up their minds – to attend the general meeting. I also encourage members to let SFUFA Executive members know your opinions on this important topic – feel free to email me at sfufapre@sfu.ca.

The SFUFA AGM and Spring General Meeting will be held from 2:00 to 4:00 pm on Tuesday April 7 in Halpern 126 (Burnaby), SUR 4040 (Surrey), and Harbour Centre 3100 (Vancouver).

COPYRIGHT AND FAIR DEALING

David Mirhady (Humanities)
SFUFA, Past-President

Colleagues who have felt unreasonably constrained in their ability to provide their students access to published material should be made aware of the following Advisory from CAUT: <http://www.caut.ca/uploads/IP-Advisory3-en.pdf>

The lawyers at CAUT have looked long and hard at this issue - longer and harder and with more expertise than we could locally. To those who are interested we highly recommend close and repeated reading of the Advisory. (It's not that long.) It offers a legally grounded interpretation of the current state of Canadian jurisprudence on copyright and fair dealing. After studying it, members can make their own, informed decisions about how to interpret the law.

The library also already has licensing agreements covering many publications for the use of SFU students and faculty.

<http://www.lib.sfu.ca/about/services/Required.htm> describes several different ways of making required readings available to students and suggests some pros and cons of each.

http://www.lib.sfu.ca/about/collections/e-book_info.htm/ lists the book publishers from which the library licenses or purchases online books, and indicates which can be linked as electronic reserves.

In planning courses you may also find it helpful to consult with the local photocopying businesses so that students can print out their readings there in a convenient and affordable way.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATOR SALARIES: A "GROWTH INDUSTRY?"

Carl James Schwarz, (Statistics and Actuarial Science)
SFUFA, Chief Negotiator

How fast have administrator salaries grown over the last five years? There is a general feeling that they have increased more than faculty and staff salaries both in absolute and relative terms. Is this true?

Table 1 summarizes Senior Administrator remuneration from 2002-2008. For those incumbents who have been in the same or similar position for the time periods, the percentage increases have ranged between 25% and 60%.

How does this compare with increases for the "average" faculty member? This is difficult to quantify exactly. If the "average salary" across, for example, Full Professors is examined, then the pool of people changes over time. Changes in salary reflect changes in step increases, promotions and retirements etc.

If a comparable exercise is attempted by tracking individual faculty salaries over time, then the increases differ greatly depending on whether members are at the ceiling of rank (no increase except for across the board increases) or are below the career progress ceiling and either above or below the break point. As well, the records for individual salaries have not been available in computer readable format until just this year, and so automated matching is problematic.

I can only offer an approximate answer. Career progress increases your salary by about 2% per year (on average). (Note that this percentage is unequally spread across the salary range with people at the lower part of the scale receiving a large percentage increase than people at the top part of the salary range.) Since 2002-03, the government has controlled across-the-board increases to:

July 2003 - 2 %
July 2004 - 0 %
July 2005 - 0 %
July 2006 - 3 %
July 2007 - 3 %

So assuming an "average" 2% increase/year since 2002/3 for career progress, and the above figures for across the board increases, the compounded increase in salary for an "average" faculty member for the same time period would be just over 19%. (Your mileage may vary.)

I make no judgment about the merit of the increases for the Senior Administrators. Many Senior Administrators work very hard, as do many Faculty and Staff. However, it is imperative for institutions under financial stress to maintain collegiality by ensuring that all groups perceive their contributions as valued and other groups as bearing their fair share of the restraint. The recent increase in the average merit steps for

administrators to 1.5 and the large percentages in annual salary indicated in the following table strain both perceptions.

Table 1. Summary of Senior Administrator Remuneration ('000s) and Selected percent change from 2002-2003.

		2007- 2008	2006- 2007	2005- 2006	2004- 2005	2003- 2004	2002- 2003
		\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
President	59%	410	399	390	317	288	258
VP Academic	38%	243	218	211	192	181	176
VP Advancement	24%	170	163	154	146	147	137
VP Finance	26%	190	181	173	163	158	151
VP Legal	42%	200	179				
AVP Legal				160	165	145	141
VP Research	39%	213	185	170	156	159	153
VP University Relations		171	166	158	150	147	
VP External Relations							85
AVP Academic	39%	179	158	150	140	136	129
AVP Financial Services		93					
AVP Financial Planning				148	140		
AVP Administration						170	126
AVP Research		136	126	none	none	none	none
AVP Students and International		160	151	137			
AVP Harbour Center						147	141
CIO	28%	201	199	183	172	167	157
Dean - Applied Sciences	37%	179	158	151	142	137	131
Dean - Arts and Social Sciences	-6%	129	175	167	153	143	137
Dean - Business Administration	39%	182	171	157	157	140	131
Dean - Continuing Studies	33%	170	151	94	135	133	128
Dean - Education	57%	166	149	141	?	95	106
Dean - Graduate Studies	35%	172	144	145	137	133	127
Dean - Health Sciences		187	178	171	160	none	none
Dean - Lib Serv and Univ Librarian	26%	169	151	141	129	124	118
Dean - Science	26%	177	158	151	142	136	138
Registrar	26%	126	135	131	122	120	116
Senior Director, Learning and Retention		125	118				
Senior Director, Recreational Services		190	101				
Director, Recreational Services				103	92	91	88
Senior Director, Student and Community Life		141	112				
Directory, Student Academic Resources				103			89
Director, Student Development and Programming Center					78		

	2007- 2008 \$	2006- 2007 \$	2005- 2006 \$	2004- 2005 \$	2003- 2004 \$	2002- 2003 \$
Executive Director, Human Resources	139	123	113	91		
Director, Human Resources					134	
Executive Director, President's Office		133	130	123		110
Executive Director, SFU Surrey			130	127	119	
Director, SFU Surrey				115	115	
Executive Director, SFU International	78	91		110	107	none
Director, International Co-operation	89	86	85	82		108

Similar positions over time have been grouped together.

Known changes in incumbent are indicated by using a box around the salary.

A note on the data and how they were collected:

In general, these are positions at the Decanal or Executive Director level or higher. The incumbent of each position was identified as of 1 September in each year based on the University Calendar or Telephone Directory. Then the remuneration was obtained from the Statement of Employee Remuneration and Expenses filed on a fiscal year basis covering the period from 1 April of that year to 31 March of the following year. The remuneration of each employee excludes travel expense reimbursement and usually includes taxable benefits such as Tuition Waivers, Life Insurance, etc. Other benefit costs (e.g. extended health care, pension) is NOT included in the remuneration figures.

Because of the mismatch between the fiscal and academic year, the remuneration values may not fully reflect the nominal annual salary. For example, suppose that an administrator from outside of SFU started a position on 1 September 2007 at \$200,000 per year. This person would only receive 7/12 of the nominal salary in the fiscal year 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008 and the statement of remuneration would show a total of \$117,000 received. Similarly, if the administrator received an increment on 1 September 2008, the full value would not be reflected immediately. For administrators who have been in their current position for several years, the discrepancy between their nominal and reported salary should be relatively small.

Percentage increases have been computed mostly for positions held by the same incumbent over the five-year period. In some cases, the administrative position did not exist until recently. I've also attempted to group together positions that have been "upgraded" over time, e.g. AVP and VP Legal. In a small number of cases, no incumbent could be identified for a position, e.g. acting incumbents only.

SFU's GOVERNANCE PROCESS

Bob Russell (Mathematics)

SFU Faculty Member

I was pleased to see the issue of administrative salaries raised by Oliver Schulte, Panayiotis Pappas, and others on the faculty-forum and have followed the ensuing discussion with great interest. Having had considerable previous experience on SFU's Board of Governors (BOG) as well as Senate, I have been fortunate to have had an inside

look at the decision-making process within SFU. I hope that my personal observations will help shed light on how the problem lies not simply with the administrators themselves, but is systemic: the university structure has no adequate mechanism for the managing of the managers (the administrators).

It was only after I was a Full Professor with a well-established research career that I became interested in the political processes at SFU and decided to run for Senate and the BOG. In large part, this broadened sense of responsibility came about from what I perceived to be a growing corporate structure within the university. To say that I was naive in my desire to strengthen the academic functions of the university is an understatement, but after being elected, one quickly learns how difficult it is to effect change even from the inside. Years later, I would characterize my experience on the Board by quoting Leonard Cohen: "They sentenced me to twenty years of boredom for trying to change the system from within."

Much inspiration for serving on the BOG came from Klaus Rieckhoff, and in like fashion, I strove to regularly inform my colleagues about the key issues and to bring sensitive ones to light. The first time I did so, I received what can only be described as a threatening response from an administrator, and it is difficult to say what effect it would have had on me had not the President, a strong believer in freedom of speech and open dialogue, come to my defence. Subsequent to that occurrence, even in the midst of heated exchanges and fundamental disagreements I have been treated with the upmost courtesy and respect by the senior administrators.

Still, the challenges facing a faculty member on the Board were substantial. The majority of Board members come from the business community and have little if any knowledge of the traditional structure of a university; their access to information about university matters is considerably filtered, with the result that they are generally naive about, and to a large extent kept naive about, the academic functioning of the university. For example, I recall once spending days preparing a document for the Board pointing out why many faculty would see problems with building options into Deans' salaries which would give them a percentage of the finances they brought into the university through fundraising. While it stirred a lively debate between me and one of the powerful members of the BOG, I do not think that the Board as a whole ever appreciated the significance of the matter.

While I was on the BOG, it was constantly emphasized by the Board's secretary that we were dealing with confidential material and were charged with making key decisions dealing with the governance of the university as members of the Board without allegiances, and we were warned not to view ourselves as "representatives" of any particular constituency. I always resisted such directives, emphasizing that my role was partly as a spokesperson for and representative of the faculty who elected me, having the responsibility to keep them informed where confidentiality considerations permitted. The group of BOG members who resisted the temptation to rubber-stamp administrative requests was generally a small one, comprised primarily of those who were able to ask insightful questions -- the members of the university community. As often as not, the important financial decisions were wrapped in a cloak of confidentiality which prevented one from bringing even important questions of principle to the broader

university community.

On the BOG I held the position of Chair of the Academic Operations Committee, whose main task was to approve all faculty appointments. Chairs of the various committees were also on the Compensation Committee, charged with setting salaries of top administrators. I always felt very isolated on this committee, frustrated by what seemed to be a ratcheting up of administrators' salaries to unwarranted levels based upon information provided by people who, having been hired by the very people being evaluated, had a conflict of interest. I was generally able to resist the pressure to support these large salary increases, in large part because I am in my wife's words a "natural glad-hander" who is able to maintain warm friendships with others despite sharp disagreements. But it was never easy.

The faculty member on the current "Employee Relations and Compensation Committee" is Paul Percival. He could probably recount a fascinating tale as to why a new policy was adopted by the BOG last year, increasing the average number of steps allotted per annum for Vice Presidents and Deans to 1.5 steps from 1.3, but I doubt he will do so due to confidentiality concerns. It was, incidentally, quite disappointed to see that this change had been adopted, as the allotment of 1.3 per annum in place when I was on the BOG had produced difficult but instructive discussion about the relative performance levels of the administrators -- just like, as most faculty members well know, it does when we are being evaluated.

There has been the temptation by many of us to simplistically consider inflated administrative salaries to be a consequence of a corporatization of the university. This is understandable given the recent history of executives at poorly run corporations awarding themselves astronomical salary increases. David Andolfatto provides enlightening counter arguments that the decisions are political and that SFU's administrative structure is more government-like than corporate-like. Regardless of one's viewpoint, the structural issues share common features with both (and, indeed, even unions). Andrew von Nordenflycht's marvelous submission to faculty-forum provides considerable insight into what drives large salary increases at the top of many organizational structures. Leslie Ballantine perceptively characterizes the consequence in a university: the administration has become a "caste" increasingly separated from faculty.

Inbreeding can be a serious problem within a small upper caste. Some of my colleagues believe such inbreeding is occurring at SFU because not enough administrators are being chosen from outside of our university. It is definitely occurring as a result of the widening gap separating the academic and administrative units. It has become extremely rare for an administrator at the Decanal level or above to return to their duties as a regular faculty member after completing their term. Joan Brockman correctly observes that this is largely a consequence of the widening disparity in salaries, with administrators understandably reluctant to return to much lower paying positions. The lack of flow back into the academic units is maintained because administrators who complete their terms of service are invariably co-opted into "special positions" within this administrative structure, where they remain until retirement. I believe that a consequence is a diminishing of the importance of the academic function of the

university, a de facto delegation of faculty members to a lower caste.

It is often not straightforward to recognize precisely what the problems are within the administrative structure at SFU. Marilyn Bowman, a very experienced and respected faculty member, notes that upon comparing our top administrators salaries with those outside the university, they are not excessive. No doubt some would beg to differ, pointing out the problems with combining the benefits of a corporate salary and the security of a university position. Nevertheless, there is presumably agreement that should SFU have a problem with inflated salaries at the top, the problem is hardly unique to SFU. Likely, most would also agree that in a time of fiscal restraint, when painful sacrifice is being asked of faculty, sacrifice from our administration should be considered as well. I have tried to indicate why I believe that resolving possible inequities between faculty members and administrators requires a reexamination of SFU's decision-making process. Even in the unlikely event that our administrators voluntarily agree to take salary cuts, as Evan Tiffany mentions was done at his alma mater UCSD, the systemic problems facing us will not disappear.

Unfortunately, even after the major problems are agreed upon, it is an even greater challenge to formulate meaningful solutions. One needs to move beyond satisfying words like responsibility, accountability, and openness to make them more than simply platitudes. Several people have suggested ways faculty members can work to create a more responsive structure at SFU, and in my opinion the answer lies in adopting almost every one -- in the parlance of a multiple choice questionnaire, the answer is E - All of the Above (or here, All of the Below).

- **Support faculty-forum.**

The forum provides an irreplaceable venue for discussing critical issues of interest to faculty. Colleagues like those at UBC bemoan the fact that they have no corresponding vehicle to keep faculty informed and bring about collective action in support of academia. It is understandable why so many people are driven away, given the low level of discourse, which can predominate on the forum, but perhaps a tutorial for new colleagues on the importance of a faculty-forum, and the necessity for frequent use of the 'delete' key would help.

- **Support more open distribution of information.**

There are many examples of where information is considered to be semi-confidential but should not be. For example, the SFU employee salaries should be published annually. This could help provide the first step in reversing the disconcerting trend to reward individuals because of their success at attracting money to the university rather than through their scholarship.

- **Expect more accountability from faculty members on committees.**

BOG: Some faculty members on the BOG feel a stronger sense of responsibility to their fellow faculty members than others, but it is reasonable for faculty who expect more accountability to be able to make informed decisions when voting for BOG candidates. While on the Board I made regular submissions on important actions undertaken by the Board to both the faculty-forum and the Faculty Association Newsletter. (See the April and November 2001 Faculty

Association Newsletters for my last such articles.) Still, one Board member's approach varies from another, and Paul Percival is to be forgiven if his recent contribution to forum "clarifying" how the Board operates does little more than draw our attention to web documentation about BOG committees, if for no other reason than because he does as much to maintain the strength and integrity of SFU's faculty as anyone on campus.

(ii) SFUFA: The university is fortunate to have such dedicated Faculty Association representatives as Bob Hackett and Carl Schwarz. Both are strong advocates for the faculty and for more accountability on the part of the administration. Carl's masterful analysis of the salary structure at SFU should prove to be invaluable during the current financial crisis.

(iii) Senate: Likewise, faculty are most fortunate to have strong, outspoken Senators like June Francis and Martin Laba. It certainly wouldn't hurt for a Senator to occasionally update the faculty as a whole about current issues.

(iv) Hiring Committees for Administrators: Chris Pavsek has pointed out the usefulness of having outspoken faculty members on these committees.

- **Develop Communication Links with the BOG.**

The current situation, where members of the Board have virtually no opportunity to be informed by regular faculty members (other than the two on the Board) about issues of concern, is in my opinion completely unacceptable. SFUFA should initiate some direct dialogue with the Board, with the format and agenda decided upon not by administration but by faculty members and individual Board members. For example, members of the BOG have a responsibility to diligently digest the data on employee salaries currently being compiled by Carl Schwarz, and there should be the opportunity to present it using the same ground rules as for the administration: a presentation is made by the author(s) with adequate time for questions and discussion.

To reiterate, a university structure where the administration serves as an opaque buffer between the governing body (the BOG) and the academic unit (the faculty) is hardly unique to SFU. Nor are the problems caused by rapidly expanding numbers of administrators with inflated salaries. Indeed, the problems are systemic and not a result of the particular individuals in charge. But I can assure you that if we do not resolve them now, while we have very fair-minded, warm individuals who are open to criticism in the top two administrative positions at SFU, then it will be only become much more difficult later on.

While providing decades of selfless service in defence of scholarship and academic freedom at SFU, my dear friend Jerry Zaslove has been rewarded by having to watch a constant erosion of the position of the Arts at SFU, so his bitter assessment that we're watching the owl of Minerva spreading its wings because still darker times lie ahead is understandable. The position of this privileged scientist, however, is more optimistic. The wide-ranging forum discussion on how to resolve the problems related the administrative function at SFU has seen constructive contribution from virtually every

corner of the academic community. I end the way I began, with a quote from Leonard Cohen: "There is a crack, a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in."

The Future of Post-Secondary Education in BC

CUFA BC's 20 Questions

Rob Clift, CUFA BC Executive Director

Over the past 20 years, BC's post-secondary system has undergone great change. The twin expansions in numbers of students and numbers and types of institutions has led to a new landscape and brought many challenges with them.

There are now four universities with full research mandates: Simon Fraser University, the University of British Columbia, the University of Northern British Columbia, and the University of Victoria. Royal Roads University has now joined these universities in offering doctoral programs. RRU therefore faces many of the same issues as the four full-mandate research universities.

For these five universities, the Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia (CUFA BC) has [identified 20 questions](#) that need critical examination in order to guide BC public policy over the next decade. These questions cover a range of issues: Accessibility, Funding, the Research-Teaching Nexus and the External Direction of Research, Governance and Accountability, Internationalization and, finally, System Coherence. As explained in our discussion paper, these issues raise complex questions of principle, of empirical fact and of appropriate balance and trade-offs.

These issues impinge on the daily lives of the faculty members and librarians who make up the membership of CUFA BC at BC's five doctoral universities. While some of these questions are common to all post-secondary institutions, many take particular forms when applied to research universities and, indeed, many are unique to them.

In identifying these questions, it is fitting that CUFA BC looks to its membership for answers. There is considerable experience and expertise in the membership — members who may have published on some of these questions or who have thoughts and opinions based on their experience working at one or more of the universities. We hope that you will want to take up the challenge of providing answers to these questions. We are also looking for comments and submissions from other stakeholders in the post-secondary education system and interested parties.

In addition to comments on particular issues, CUFA BC is also looking for more substantial contributions of 1500-2500 words that might range from opinion pieces based on members' experiences to summaries of previously published research. These submissions will be posted on a website and serve as a resource to CUFA BC and to

others who wish to consider any of these or related questions. Whatever the form, CUFA BC would like to hear from you. Your contribution will help to shape CUFA BC's strategic plan.

Please e-mail your contributions to cufabc@sfu.ca by no later than May 31, 2009. If you would like further details or would like to discuss a contribution before submitting it, please use this e-mail address to contact us.

Question 1: What explains BC's historically low university participation rate? How can it be increased?

Question 2: To ensure that the increasingly diverse student population attending the research universities is provided with a learning environment designed to maximize success, what support mechanisms need to be in place for students and faculty?

Question 3: How do participation rates differ by region within the province? To what extent does the availability of universities locally reduce these differences? What are the challenges facing the multi-campus research university in providing more geographic accessibility and how can they best be addressed?

Question 4: What strategies do research universities need to follow in order to assess and increase the rate of participation in, and completion of, degree programs by students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and first generation students?

Question 5: What strategies can research universities employ to increase the number of Aboriginal students entering into and successfully completing degree programs?

Question 6: What should the relationships be between research universities and Aboriginal communities?

Question 7: How should post-secondary tuition fees be set to balance the burden between individual students and the taxpayers? What are the optimal tuition fee policies to attract students to the province, to increase accessibility and to maintain adequate funding levels for research universities?

Question 8: What funding framework would provide research universities with adequate and predictable operating grants?

Question 9: How should BC fund graduate student spaces at its research universities? How should BC provide incentives to keep the best and brightest graduate students in BC and attract students from elsewhere in Canada and around the world?

Question 10: What is the role, and benefit, of further developing the link between research and teaching in research-based universities? Question 11: How should research universities respond to the government direction of, and implicit hierarchies within, research funding?

Question 12: How should business-directed/funded research and the commercialization of research be managed in contemporary research universities?

Question 13: What governance structures will ensure universities will continue to offer high-quality educational programs and advance the frontiers of knowledge?

Question 14: What accountability mechanisms will ensure public universities spend public money for its intended purpose and are fulfilling their legislative mandates without government directly or indirectly violating institutional autonomy?

Question 15: How, should academic freedom be protected in the contemporary university?

Question 16: In the research university context, how should the pursuit knowledge for its own sake be balanced with the needs of the labour market and of society as a whole?

Question 17: How should universities seek to internationalize?

Question 18: How should BC's degree programs and degree-granting institutions be regulated to ensure students are being offered legitimate and high-quality educational programs?

Question 19: How can BC research universities become more successful in retaining the best and brightest faculty and recruiting new faculty from elsewhere in Canada and internationally?

Question 20: What would a 'coherent post-secondary education system' in BC look like?

TOXIC ENVIRONMENTS - 7 STEPS TO CHANGE

Gina J. Hiatt, Ph.D. (www.AcademicLadder.com)

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I've been working with a professor who has been completely blocked and unable to write. In reviewing how this came about, he described the unfriendly environment in his department that had existed for the past several years. This toxic environment had led to some people leaving his university and several others being stalled out on their research. Through our discussions, he started to realize that the situation had also had a negative impact on him.

In retrospect, it seems obvious - a toxic work environment leads to demoralization and lack of productivity. But when you're immersed in such an environment, it's like living near a garbage dump. After a while, you don't notice the smell. And you certainly don't feel like it's affecting you.

This professor was chagrined to discover that the events in his environment had indeed affected him. His first response was to feel shame. After all, if you're a logical human being, you should be immune to such behavior in others. So I told him about the infamous prison experiment by Philip Zimbardo, in which undergraduates assigned to be either prison guards or prisoners in a mock setup, quickly fell into their roles and experienced the same emotions that true prisoners or guards would feel (e.g. shame and demoralization or a sense of entitlement and even enjoyment of bullying.)

Another issue that made his problem harder for him to recognize is that most of the negative messages were being given to others, not to him. As is often the case, he discounted the extent to which witnessing others being victimized is harmful to his own sense of safety.

And finally, his only "symptom" was his inability to write up his research and submit it. He was able to function well in all other aspects of his career. I was able to tell him that this is not unusual. Writing seems to be the "canary in the coal mine" that is the most sensitive to the mental mayhem that traumatic or toxic environments can cause in your brain.

Why is writing so sensitive to environmental disruption? It may be because the dissociation that your brain achieves in order to allow you to function works best when you're busy and responding to the demands of others. (Dissociation is the disconnection of your emotional self-awareness from your cognitive knowledge of what's going on. So, for example, you might be able to say to yourself, "That's a terrible way for that person to talk to me," without consciously experiencing the rage or hurt that should accompany the situation.) In order to write, especially to write something that will be read and judged by others, you must quiet your mind and tune into the more creative, open side of your brain - the right hemisphere. That side of your brain is also more in touch with your emotions.

Thus, people who feel perfectly fine may sit down to write and be instantly filled with intense dread, fear or even rage -- the flooding back of the emotions that had been held at bay by staying busy. The fact that scholarly writing is connected with the toxic environment that created the bad feelings makes the feeling much worse. Needless to say, if you're filled with such strong negative emotions - particularly when they don't make sense to you, you'll do what it takes to avoid those feelings. Hence, procrastination and paralysis when it comes to scholarly writing.

Writing is hard enough for people in sane environments, and writer's block is common enough, that you don't need to compound it by surrounding yourself with unhealthy, negative situations.

Can a toxic academic environment really have this powerful an impact on someone? Of course it can. And I know that my newsletter readers are aware of this fact - a recent teleclass that I held called "How Academia Messes With Your Mind (and what to do about it)" attracted 483 listeners. The articles that I've written on bullying have led to dozens of emails from academics recounting terrible situations and the impact on their subsequent careers.

So what should you do to protect yourself from the ravages of a potentially toxic environment? Here are 7 steps that you can take, along with comments and examples of questions you can consider in order to assess yourself.

1. Identify what is unhealthy in the environment

- Do I dread departmental meetings because you cringe at the way people speak to each other?

- Do I avoid meeting with my advisor because of the unnecessarily negative things he says about me in addition to or instead of the feedback I need?
 - Is there one person who is allowed to "misbehave" egregiously, without any apparent intervention from people at the administrative level?
 - Is the level of competitiveness so high that I feel worse when I'm around colleagues?
2. Acknowledge the impact a toxic environment is having on you
 - Do I daydream frequently about leaving academia?
 - Have I gone an unusually long period of time without writing?
 - Do I feel isolated?
 - Do I like there's something wrong with me?
 3. If you've been having trouble writing, and you suspect it is at least partly due to a toxic environment, decide whether you need to leave the environment or whether there is anything you can do to change the environment (see Step 7.)
 4. If you decide to stay and try to increase your writing productivity (sometimes that's the only way to create the situation that will allow you to leave and find new work, as in my client's case), try writing a little bit every day (start with small steps – say 10 minutes a day). If you still avoid writing, spend 5-10 minutes a day writing about the feelings that come up for you when you think about writing. Note bodily sensations and negative self-statements. Make sure that you replace those negative self-statements with positive statements (you received samples of these when you signed up for my newsletter).
 5. Find a support group of other academics that provides a positive environment.
 6. Sign up for the Academic Writing Club. Many of the techniques we use in the Club are set up to help you overcome these kinds of writing blocks.
 7. Educate yourself about toxic academic environments by attending the teleclass, "Antioxidants for Toxic Academic Work Environments," taught by Meggin McIntosh, Ph.D., which I am hosting on November 12. Find out more by going here: <http://www.meggin.com/academicladder.php>

You don't deserve to spend the rest of your life (or another day) in an environment that is not treating you and others around you with respect. Life's too short -- do what you must to protect yourself.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

FACULTY ASSOCIATION NOMINATIONS NOW

The Faculty Association is actively seeking nominations for the 2009-2010 SFUFA Executive Committee.

SFUFA is a volunteer organization that depends on members serving members to fulfill its purposes, which are outlined in our Constitution:

- To assert the integrity of the academic profession;
- To defend academic freedom in teaching and research;
- To promote the welfare of all faculty members and librarians;
- To foster high standards of excellence in teaching and scholarship;
- To act as the sole bargaining agent of all faculty members employed by Simon Fraser University;
- To regulate relations between faculty members and the university through collective bargaining.

The Framework Agreement, which governs SFUFA's relationship with the University, recognizes that a member's contribution to the Association shall be deemed service to the University and recognized in all performance assessments including contract renewal, tenure and promotion and salary reviews.

Members of the Faculty Association Executive are expected to attend two meetings per month, both of which are on Thursday mornings, beginning at 9:15 and running to no later than noon. One of these meetings includes a consultation with the senior administration. Directors are expected to regularly attend these meetings; further involvement is voluntary and dependent on a director's interests and availability. Anyone interested in the position of President Elect can contact the current President for more information [Bob Hackett at sfufapre@sfu.ca].

According to SFUFA's bylaws, the Executive Committee is made up of a President, President Elect, and eight Directors, together with the immediate Past-President, if any. Of the eight Directors, at least one must be a Librarian or Archivist and at least one must be a Teaching Appointment representative.

Current Executive Members who will continue to serve are:

Bob Hackett, Past President
Hilmar Pabel, President
Glenn Chapman, Director
Mike Sjoerdsma, Director
Steve Whitmore, Director

Nominations are invited for the following positions:

- 1 President Elect for a three-year term (one year as President Elect (or Vice-President), one year as President, and one year as Past President);
- 1 Director (Teaching Appointment) for a one-year term;
- 1 Director (Librarian) for a two-year term;
- 3 Directors for two-year terms.

****Important to note:**

1. We encourage applicants from all equity seeking groups on campus.
2. We currently have no women on the Executive, and no Executive members from the faculties of Business Administration, Science, or Health Sciences.

If you are willing to put forward your name for nomination, PLEASE COMPLETE [THE NOMINATION FORM](#) AND RETURN IT TO THE SFUFA OFFICE (AQ 2035) NO LATER THAN NOON, Monday March 16, 2009.

Contact information for the current Executive is available on the SFUFA home page at www.sfufa.ca.

If you need more information, please contact a current member of the Executive: see list here http://www.sfufa.ca/index.php?option=com_contact&catid=20&Itemid=3

Or e-mail the office staff at sfufa@sfu.ca.

YWCA WOMEN OF DISTINCTION AWARDS

Nominations are now being accepted for the 26th Annual YWCA Vancouver Women of Distinction Awards. For a nomination form and complete nomination information, please visit www.ywcavan.org/distinction. Nominations are due Tuesday March 17th, 2009 at 10:00am.

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.

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 stenenso@sfu.ca.