
President's Message



David DeVidi, Philosophy

The Importance of Being Heard

The issue of faculty input into important decisions — especially those that influence the effectiveness with which the university achieves its academic goals in teaching and research or the working conditions of faculty — is a complicated one. It's also one that I hear about from FAUW members as much as any other.

On the one hand, I think it is fair to say that many faculty feel that they are not consulted about important decisions where their input would be valuable and appropriate. Without descending into the details of the many particular decisions that

have raised the blood pressure of some of those who have talked to me, I will mention just a few things I've heard. Some can joke about it: What is the shortest measurable unit of time? The time between "It's too preliminary to talk about" and "It's too late to change it now." Some faculty mention being on committees that are asked to retroactively approve a decision they had no hand in making, seemingly in an effort to give a facade of consultation to decisions made without it. Some are frustrated that WAT-green, an advisory body that includes faculty representatives from across campus and which is dedicated to the "Greening of Campus," and one that had a hand in many successful green initiatives on campus in the past, has not met for many months — this at a time when there is a boom in construction and decisions are being made that are changing the campus forever, in a way that some faculty see as not showing due concern for environmental considerations. Some see decisions with long-term implications about academic matters being made, it seems, without any process at all, and being passed

down to departments and individual faculty with no clear evidence of their authorship.

But the frustrations are not only on the faculty side. More than once senior administrators, for instance at the Faculty Relations Committee, have asked FAUW for suggestions about effective means of getting useful feedback from faculty about changes that are in the works. It pays to be very cautious about sending *emails* that ask for feedback, because any such mass mailing is sure to draw a bunch of complaints, not all of them polite; sending out a paper ques-

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tionnaire will draw similar complaints from others. And response rates are often low. Sometimes, I suspect, the same events get very different interpretations: a mandated consultation process might be ignored by some faculty members because they don't think their input will make any difference; the resulting small turnouts mean that such processes seems *pro forma* to administrators, because they rarely attract much interest.

Some colleagues who have served or are serving as Chairs tell me of being inundated with requests for information, and of receiving distinct requests for the same information from different people on campus within weeks of one another. The feeling of being consulted to death about minutiae and kept in the dark about the big issues is common.

The lack of consultation is not only a matter of hurt feelings for faculty. When decisions are made without consultation with those in a position to offer worthwhile information, the result is more likely to be a poor decision. For instance, what can happen is that a person who controls some resources might hear a pitch for an "innovative" idea and find it initially plausible. If there is no mechanism for subjecting the proposal to general scrutiny at an early stage, the decision maker may well hear only from people already

on-side with the proposal — after all, it hardly seems collegial to go out of one's way to send an uninvited, derogatory note about a colleague's proposal up the line of command, even if you happen somehow to have heard about a dodgy proposal. The result can be genuine surprise for the decision maker when the decision meets with hostility once it is announced — but by then it is much harder to turn back, human nature being what it is and a change of mind sometimes feeling like it involves a loss of face. It is also much more difficult for the rest of us to raise hard questions about a proposal at that late stage, because it can require public disagreement with powerful figures in the university, perhaps including those who sign off on your annual performance review.

Smart decision making processes not only raise the probability of smart decisions, but also the probability that they will be *seen* to be smart decisions. The "Waterloo Way" is often touted as a real advantage for this university. While the details of what the Waterloo Way is have never been particularly clear to me, in part it involves being flexible and able to react quickly to changes in circumstances, and part of that flexibility is a history of rational cooperation between the administration and the faculty. In the long run rational cooperation is sustainable only if all parties can trust one another; and trust can be eroded

by people trying to do the right thing, especially if they're in a rush. Even a right decision, if reached in the wrong way, can have unfortunate consequences.

UW faculty have no desire to put in place rigid procedures that will prevent productive changes in the way things are done. But if the appropriate level of trust is to be maintained, it seems pretty clear that decisions about what counts as a productive change need to be collegial decisions, not administrative fiats. FAUW is willing to work together with the administration to develop *sensible* practices for consultation. By this we mean that the processes should be *collegial* and *transparent*, but should avoid the perils of too much of the wrong sort of consultation. But no procedural rules will help much unless the importance of faculty input into the decisions that affect our work, and so the work of the university, is recognized by decision makers, so it is sought early enough to make a difference. And, on our side, that we take the opportunity to provide constructive feedback when it presents itself, and recognize that sometimes the reasons we offer will not carry the day — something that it is much easier to do if the rationale for decisions is made clear.

Editor's Message

David Wang, Electrical and Computer Engineering

This time of year is a wonderful time for sports fans. Baseball and Canadian football seasons have just come to an exciting conclusion, and American football is in full swing. Hockey and basketball leagues are starting up, with everyone full of optimism about their favourite club. For me, hockey holds special significance as, besides being a fanatic fan, I also have eight of my children involved in the sport. Sitting in cold arenas has given me ample opportunity to reflect on the similarities between a successful hockey team and a successful university.

It is often said that a team must have chemistry if it is to challenge for the top. In hockey, things have been made even more interesting by the creation of a salary cap, which means that teams can no longer spend without constraint. Most successful teams include a mix of different types of players. There are your highly skilled players who have incredible skating, stick-handling and shooting talent. However, there are also players who are called grinders. These are typically less skilled players that play with a huge heart. They never give up and are essential to a successful team. In hockey, we even have fighters, whose main job is to protect the other players and allowing them to play their game. Of course, the coach and general managers are also important

members of the team, as their decisions about the player selection and strategy can make or break the franchise. The key is to balance all these factors, under the constraint of the ever-important salary cap. Examples abound where teams try to stack their teams with only skilled players but such a team typically self-destructs quickly.

There is a very interesting mapping between such a hockey team and a typical university. If we were to substitute budget constraints for salary cap, president for general manager, department chair for coach, high flying researcher for skilled player, excellent teachers for grinders and fighters for administrators, it is uncanny how the same principles hold, in my opinion, between a successful hockey team and a successful university. Thus, I believe that our university should ask itself a few questions. Does focusing on hiring mainly high flying researchers who may not have the ability to teach make sense? Shouldn't departments have a balance between high profile researchers, excellent teachers and proficient administrators, particularly in the face of budget constraints?

With a limited budget compared to that of other teams, is it possible for us to strive to be at the top? Imagine if a hockey team were allowed to triple its salary cap relative to our own

small market team. Is it even possible for us to compete? Could we destroy what we have in our attempts to strive to do the impossible? We really need to look at our hiring practices and our strategic directions. Perhaps we shouldn't aim unrealistically high until we have a budget that is comparable to those universities that we are trying to overtake in quality.

Now, our webpage is finally up. One of the most important aspects of this page is the Questions and Suggestions for Administrators. I would greatly encourage you all to submit questions which I can forward onto President Johnston, who is our first administrator. This initiative works only if you participate. If we, as a faculty, continue to stay apathetic, then we will have nothing to say if the direction of the university shifts to one that we have issues with.

FAUW Office

Pat Moore, Administrative Officer
Room 4002, Mathematics & Computer
Building

Phone: 519-888-4567, ext. 33787

Fax: 519-888-4307

E-mail: facassoc@uwaterloo.ca

Website: <http://www.fauw.uwaterloo.ca>

Pensions and Benefits Committee

Jock MacKay, Statistics and Actuarial Science

Proposed Changes for Benefit Funding – An Idea That Did Not Fly

The University currently funds our benefit plans (Extended Health, Dental, Life Insurance) on a year-by-year basis and, over time, has absorbed significant increases in costs. There have been no major additions to these benefits in the last ten years despite requests from the employee groups, largely, I believe, because of the increased costs of existing plans.

The University recently proposed a change in the way the amount of money available for benefits would be determined. You can find a detailed explanation of their proposal by consulting the Minutes of the October 5 P&B Committee meeting on the Secretariat's web site.

An obvious benefit of the proposal from the Administration's point of view is that it would be very useful for budget planning. The basic idea was that the University would commit to an increase of $x\%$ in benefit funding per year, where x would be decided for the next 5 years. The University would also establish a reserve fund that could be used for smoothing cost increases. If benefit costs rose by less than $x\%$, then the reserve would grow and, at some point, the P&B Committee could use the accu-

mulated funds to purchase extra benefits. On the other hand, if there were insufficient funds, the University would lend the Committee money for at most two consecutive years. At that point, if there were a shortfall, the P&B Committee would need to cut benefits or raise extra cash from the members.

The employee group committee members rejected the proposal. We did so mainly because we felt that another effect of the change would be that all of the risk of large cost increases would be transferred to the employees. There was also a general feeling that the suggested values of x were too small, making benefit cuts before long extremely likely; and, certainly, the preliminary proposal did not come with enough long-term data to allow an accurate estimate of what value of x could be considered reasonable, even if the proposal was judged reasonable in principle.

Shortly after the meeting, the P&B representatives and presidents of the various employee groups on campus had a meeting to discuss how to proceed from here. We agreed that we would be willing to consider revised versions of the proposal if they came with much more detail, or at any alternative plans that might come forward. The employee

groups will also be working cooperatively to try to generate proposals that we might take to the committee, rather than merely reacting to proposals from the administration. We recognize the interests of the University, as an employer, in issues of cost control and budget planning, but also know that if it is to be successful at attracting and retaining employees the University has an interest in protecting existing benefits, and, perhaps, providing for improvements.

FAUW FORUM

The FAUW Forum is a service for UW faculty sponsored by the Association. It seeks to inform members about current Association matters, to promote the exchange of ideas and to foster open debate on issues with a wide and balanced spectrum of views.

Opinions expressed in the Forum are those of the authors, and ought not to be perceived as representing the views of the Association, its Board of Directors, or of the Editorial Board of the Forum, unless so specified. Members are invited to submit letters, news items and brief articles.

If you do not wish to receive the Forum, please contact the Faculty Association Office and your name will be removed from the mailing list.

Noted Briefly — Other FAUW Issues

David DeVidi, President

Campuses Outside Waterloo-Kitchener-Cambridge: FAUW Board members have received a number of calls from professors concerned that they might be pressured to spend time teaching at proposed campuses in the United Arab Emirates, Stratford, or elsewhere. When we asked at FRC specifically about professors being pressured to spend time at the proposed UAE campus, we received *verbal* assurances that no professor would ever be forced to go to the UAE, and a prediction that there would be competition for the opportunity to go there. It is FAUW's view that this is the sort of thing that the university ought to be willing to put into writing. We are confident in the sincerity of present administrators when they give their word that nobody will be forced, because we have good reason to trust their commitments; but we suspect that some of the worried faculty members we have heard from might, for instance, wonder whether future administrators would take a different approach if the predicted popularity of postings to the UAE does not materialize. Our opinion is of course similar for other proposed campuses. We urge anyone who feels they are being forced to go to the UAE to be in touch with us about it.

Representation of St. Jerome's Faculty: Faculty members at St Jerome's University pay dues to FAUW, though they are employ-

ees of St Jerome's University, not of the University of Waterloo. They also have their own St Jerome's University Faculty Association (which does not collect dues). However, the relationship of these faculty members, and of the SJUFA, to FAUW is rather unclear.

Faculty gain many benefits from the fact that FAUW is recognized by the university as their representative under the Memorandum of Agreement. Most obviously, FAUW is the collective bargaining agent for salary negotiations. Faculty also have important rights under the M of A, for instance, grievance rights that provide some protection against arbitrary treatment. The Association, through the Faculty Relations Committee, plays an important role in hammering out a wide range of policies relevant to their employment at UW, from the rules for the appointment of Chairs and Deans to the rules for going to a partial workload before retirement. FAUW also plays an important role in such matters as safeguarding the academic freedom of its members. So much is clear for on-campus faculty.

What St Jerome's professors get for their dues is less clear. St Jerome's does tend to follow the UW lead for salary settlements, and faculty at St Jerome's can approach our Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee for help, though the

amount of help AF&T can offer is constrained by the fact that UW policies do not apply. Moreover, since St Jerome's faculty do not fall under the Memorandum of Agreement, FAUW has no direct hand in negotiating St Jerome's policies through the Faculty Relations Committee. The President of the SJUFA is a member of the FAUW Board, and the current President, Nick Zunic, is involved in a lot of important FAUW work, currently as our point-person on child care issues and last year as a member of FRC. But some St Jerome's policies, for instance the policy on grievances, are not nearly as good as the corresponding UW policies from a faculty member's point of view, and the decision making procedures, at least as outlined in the policy book, give professors an alarmingly small role to play in determining the academic life of the university. For a problematic policy at UW, there are mechanisms for FAUW to try to change them, which is part of what the FAUW dues pay for; FAUW has no such mechanisms for raising these issues with St Jerome's. There are also important issues about how effectively either FAUW or SJUFA can defend the academic freedom of St Jerome's faculty.

FAUW has therefore set up a sub-committee to consider these issues: more narrowly, the question of the appropriate relationship between FAUW at SJUFA; more broadly, questions

to do with the appropriate representation of St Jerome's faculty. The committee includes the FAUW President, two members of the FAUW Board who happen to be from St Jerome's, and two other members of the Board. We'll keep you posted on how things unfold.

Equity Issues at UW: FAUW has set up a working group, headed by FAUW Vice-President Susan Leat of the School of Optometry, to consider a number of issues around equity on campus. It seems to us that the administration is somewhat more sanguine than we are about the state of hiring and pay equity on campus, so one of the jobs of the working group will be to gather preliminary information about the status of these issues; if appropriate, they also will make recommendations to the Board about how equity can be advanced on campus, ideally in ways that are effective but do not increase faculty workloads. If you have some information you think this working group should know about, Susan would be happy to hear from you at leat@uwaterloo.ca.

Salary Negotiations Underway: As has been the practice in recent salary negotiations, the bulk of the negotiations will be handled by a two-person team, with the President of the Association as a third member to be called on when appropriate. Metin Renksizbulut, of Mechanical and Mechatronic Engineering, and Jock MacKay, of Statistics and Actuarial Science, will be the

team members this time around. Preliminary discussions have recently begun.

Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee

Restructuring: We reported in the previous issue of the *FAUW Forum* that one goal for the year is to revitalize the AF&T Committee. To that end, FAUW has appointed former FAUW Vice-President Melanie Campbell, of the Department of Physics and Astronomy, as a consultant to the Board to advise us about restructuring the AF&T Committee. The best known of AF&T's work is providing advice and support to individual faculty members on matters related to tenure, promotion, or other employment related issues, and this will always be the fundamental service the committee provides. But AF&T has always also played a role in heading off problems before they arise, or defusing them before they become full-blown grievances. Melanie has a mandate from the Board to consult broadly and consider all options, with a few specific goals in mind. One goal is enhancing the effectiveness of AF&T's role in defusing problems before they become grievances. Another is making the position of Chair of AF&T one that is sufficiently attractive that a mid-career professor with the abundant skills it takes to do the job well would consider it; this will include considering ways to reduce the ridiculous workload the Chair carries, perhaps by hiring staff support, and working with the administration on ways

to ensure that the enormous service the Chair of AF&T performs *for the university* and *for faculty members* gets properly recognized. We hope for her report before the end of the Winter term. Meanwhile, the current Chair, Frank Reynolds, recently retired from the Department of Statistics and Actuarial Science, continues to do an excellent job, and has been recruiting and training new members for the Committee. If you have information you think would help Melanie carry out her role, she'd be glad to receive it: you can reach her at mcampbel@uwaterloo.ca.

Field Trips and Insurance

Coverage: An issue that we continue to receive calls about is that some professors no longer go on field trips because they are not sure that they are covered by university insurance when they do so. When we raised this issue recently at the Faculty Relations Committee, the response was that field trips are university business, and so such trips *are* covered by university insurance; what *is* required is that faculty fill out a risk management form, easily accessible from the safety office web site, in advance of any "higher risk" field work; moreover, there may be insurance complications if the field work is in notably dangerous parts of the world. The paperwork is "not onerous" in the opinion of the administrators speaking about this issue at FRC. If you are receiving different information about insurance coverage, let us know and we will try to get to the bottom of

2007 Hagey Lecture — Dr. Roberta Bondar



Space scientist, neurologist, author, astronaut and photographer Roberta Bondar presented the 2007 Hagey Lecture on November 14th. Her talk was entitled: “When we get to Mars will our legs be flippers: What space medicine teaches Canadians about life on Earth.”



Hagey Lecture Committee Chair Vera Golini, FAUW President David DeVidi and Roberta Bondar at the dinner before the lecture.



Vice-President, Academic and Provost Amit Chakma and Roberta Bondar at the dinner.



Alan Morgan of Earth & Environmental Sciences introduced Roberta Bondar at the Student Colloquium on the afternoon of November 14.

Photo credits:

Hagey Lecture and dinner, Paul Eagles, FAUW Board of Directors.

Student Colloquium, Chris Hughes, Graphics.

A Note from the Editor

As a follow-up to David Devidi's message about being heard at UW, we would like to invite you to visit the new FAUW Online at <http://strobe.uwaterloo.ca/fauw>. As soon as you go to this link, you will be prompted for your normal uw userid and password. Enjoy the content but, in particular, we invite you to participate in two very important initiatives!

1. Please click on "Questions & Suggestions to Administrators" and submit some questions for President Johnston. This is an extraordinary opportunity for you to interact anonymously directly with the administration at UW.
2. Please click on the Discussion Board. This is a password protected private forum for FAUW members only. You will need to quickly request a new account, which will be set up for you within 24 hours. This forum is for the benefit of all faculty members and will only be effective with your participation.

This is a great opportunity to voice your opinions and to interact with other faculty members. Please make use of it!

FASS 2008

Want to participate in FASS but can't make it to our evening auditions in January? FASS is considering having a Faculty-only audition period for those of you who would like to be in the play but can't make it to the evening auditions on January 9th, 10th and 11th. We would love to have input about when a good time would be!

We're also looking for people who are interested in appearing as cameos in the show –cameos would have a walk-on role of one or two lines and don't need to attend rehearsals – they get to show up on the night of the show. Appearing in FASS is an excellent way to show your students that you are not as boring as they think!

What is FASS?

FASS stands for Faculty, Alumni, Staff and Students, and we've been part of the UW community for over 45 years, entertaining all comers. For the past three decades, we've put on a themed musical comedy with the help of people from all four corners of the university.

The theme for this year is "Global Warming: The Musical".

Find out more at our website, fass.uwaterloo.ca.

If you'd like have a say, or just have any other questions, comments and queries, please email me at producer@fass.uwaterloo.ca.

Robert Burke
Producer FASS 2008