

## President's Message



David DeVidi, Philosophy

### FACULTY FEEDBACK WANTED

There has in recent weeks been a heartening response by the University Administration to some longstanding issues that the Association knows to be important to faculty members, because members raise them with us often. I'll devote the first half of this message to describing two such developments. In both cases, there are mechanisms through which faculty members can send their ideas and be sure that they will be heard by people in a position to do something about them. In the second half I'll provide some feedback of my own about the University's push to increase "professional and career oriented" graduate degrees, a topic faculty raise with me frequently.

**(1) Consultations about Faculty Consultation:** The lack of faculty

consultation about, input on, and influence over important decisions on campus is an issue that FAUW has been making noise about consistently — publically in the Forum in recent President's Messages, indirectly in the Editorial in the last issue, and behind the scenes through mechanisms like the Faculty Relations Committee — because we know it is important to our members. Judging by some remarks in the announcement of the reappointment of President Johnston for an abbreviated third term, faculty members also made this message known in the reappointment process.

To their credit, the key administrators of the University seem to have recognized that there is a problem here. They have asked the Faculty Association to suggest ideas to them about ways to ensure appropriate input and influence for faculty in the decision making process, and mechanisms to ensure better communications between Needles Hall and (so to speak) the rank and file.

Many faculty members, I know, will think that the main thing to change is attitudes — those they suspect dominate in Needles Hall that lead to jokes like "the shortest measurable unit of time is the time between 'too preliminary to discuss' and 'too late to do anything about' at UW," and faculty cynicism about whether what they say or do can make any difference. But my own

view is that we should take this opportunity as evidence that these attitudes are not common on either side, and try to address some obvious structural problems that prevent suitable flows of information. For instance, much information that reaches Deans about how things are going in departments comes from Chairs, and much of the information that reaches Needles Hall runs through Deans' Council; this strikes me as a recipe for ensuring that not much bad news about, for instance, how well new initiatives are faring will travel up the administrative hierarchy, as in each case the person passing along the news is probably someone who vigorously pitched the idea in the first place. So, could there be a suitable mechanism to ensure that the concerns of the faculty actually trying to implement some of these bold new ideas reach the center?

The FAUW Board has already passed along some of its own

*(Continued on page 2)*

### Inside this issue:

Editorial	4
Faculty Concerns at St. Jerome's	5
Commentary: Academic Integrity and the <i>Epistemic Capacities</i> of Senate	5

(Continued from page 1)

ideas about how to improve consultation and communication to the Administration. But we have also let them know that we will be placing this call to FAUW members, asking them to pass on to us their ideas for improvement. We will compile the results early in the Fall term, discuss them at the FAUW Board, and take them to FRC for discussion and, we hope, implementation of the best ones.

**Please send your comments and ideas on this matter to Pat Moore, at the FAUW office, [facassoc@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:facassoc@uwaterloo.ca).**

**(2) Merit Reviews:** As members who have been around for a few years will know, the merit review process has been a serious issue for FAUW members for a long time. The progress of the issue is a striking example of how one sometimes has to take the long view on FAUW issues. In Winter 2006, an ad hoc committee of the FAUW Board put together a questionnaire about the merit process (and workload). In 2006-07 the questionnaire was used for a survey in which we had members of our Council of Representatives interview two members of each academic unit, one a person with a significant administrative post in the department (Chair or Associate Chair), and one without. (More precisely, we tried to do this, and eventually we had 50 respondents). We reported on the results of this survey about 12 months ago in the Forum, and in more detail in the Online Forum. You can see the report on the Online Forum website at <https://strobe.uwaterloo.ca/fauw/>

When salary negotiations concluded in the Winter 2008, an important part of the Memorandum of Settlement was that a Working Group be set up to review the

Merit process and make recommendations for how to improve it. That Working Group is now beginning its work. The members of the committee are Adel Sedra (Dean of Engineering), Elizabeth Jewkes (Chair of Management Sciences), Elizabeth Meiering (Chemistry), Mary Jane Jennings of Institutional Analysis and Planning as a resource person for the committee, and me. The Group sees that information gathering is an important first step for making any sensible recommendations. It will soon be putting out a call to faculty members for input, and will also be setting up a few focus groups to discuss issues in somewhat more depth. The call will ask for input to be sent to Mary Jane Jennings, but if you prefer you can send it to another committee member. If, for instance, you want your input to remain confidential, you could send it to me. Also, let me or another member of the Group know if you would like to be considered for membership in one of the focus groups.

### **PROFESSIONAL AND “CAREER ORIENTED” GRADUATE DEGREES**

An issue that I think needs serious discussion among UW faculty members and between the Administration and the faculty is the push to increase the proportion of students paying unregulated tuition fees for “professional” degrees. Many faculty members have expressed concerns to me about this, whether about particular proposals for new programs or about the overall strategy, and the concerns almost always come down to a worry that this poses a threat to the quality of education provided at UW and so a threat to its reputation. I was therefore heartened to see the University

President and the Provost taking the time to try to justify the strategy at the June Senate meeting. I would like to take this opportunity to say some things in hopes of stimulating further discussion.

Colin Farrelly’s article in this Forum reflects the concern many faculty members feel about changes to approval processes for graduate programs. At the Senate meeting, *the Provost was very upfront about the fact that proposals for new graduate programs must come with a “business model” that shows that they will make money for the University, or at least break even*, and that of the two dozen proposals now in the works perhaps a dozen will fail this test. *The worry I and other faculty members have, frankly, is that this might in practice be the only test such proposals will need to pass.* Two items in the press in late June make the worry acute: (1) a senior UW faculty member is reported in the June 23 *Record* as saying that a second building in Uptown Waterloo “will house a master’s program in law”; (2) There is a job ad in the June *CAUT Bulletin* for two new faculty members who (among other things) “will help to launch a new graduate and undergraduate curriculum in social innovation and transformational leadership at the University of Waterloo.” *Neither of these graduate programs has been approved, and each is controversial among faculty who have heard rumours about them.*

One catalyst for a new round of worry on this score was the minutes of a recent Senate Long Range Planning meeting, which said, of the proposal for a Master’s of Public Service, that “given the multi-Faculty involvement, SLRP will serve as the

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

‘Faculty’ oversight (Arts will administer the program).” But SLRP is not a body well-suited to the quality control role played by, for instance, the Graduate Affairs Group in Arts, which is made up of all the Graduate Officers of existing graduate programs; moreover, the optics of this are not good, as SLRP is chaired by the Provost, and includes the Deans, the President, and a handful of Vice-Presidents — notably the very people who came back from K-Bay\* with renewed commitment to an increase in expansion of professional and career oriented programs. If the Public Service program serves as a precedent, the net effect is to put decisions about controversial programs into the hands of a committee on which the senior administration is a majority, provided the controversial program can recruit a single faculty member from outside the home faculty to produce “multi-Faculty involvement.”

At the Senate meeting it was stated that multi-Faculty programs would still go to the bodies normally charged with approving new programs in each involved faculty “for advice”. There was also some suggestion that the eventual goal is some new mechanism, one better suited to a quality-control role than SLRP, to handle multi-Faculty programs. The latter strikes me as a fine idea, if the new mechanism is well-designed. But until the mechanism is in place, and since there is no real evidence that existing mechanisms are problematic, I think the existing mechanisms should be relied on. In any case, Senators should be willing to grill those presenting proposals for new programs that arrive at the Senate floor about the approval process, and give much

more vigorous scrutiny to any that have bypassed the normal processes.

*A large part of the presentation in support of the expansion of our offerings of Professional Master’s degrees at UW was devoted to pointing to the large proportion of the student population taking Master’s at Harvard, MIT, and other large private universities in the US. This calls to mind regular discussions among philosophers about a difference between graduate work in Canada and the US — in Canada, a Master’s degree still means something, while in American programs it is either a throw in one gets on the way to a PhD (two degrees for the price of one!) or people get a PhD without getting a Master’s at all. The terminal Master’s is all but dead in philosophy in the US (and the same is true, I suspect, for many other academic disciplines). Is the creation of increasing numbers of non-academic Master’s degrees a step in this direction for UW? Why go through the gut-wrenching work of producing an MA thesis when one gets credentials of the same value in the marketplace by traveling much less demanding tracks? If this is a step in that direction, is that a bad thing?*

Some of the inferences Senators were invited to make in the presentation by the President and Provost were unsupported by the evidence provided (e.g., that the differences in “productivity” between Canada and the US has much to do with the relative numbers of Master’s degrees granted), and the few data points provided were obviously rather carefully selected. This is inevitable in a 10-15 minute presentation, of course. But, as some fellow Sena-

*tors pointed out to me after the meeting, even the data presented could be run as an argument of similar quality against getting into the Professional Master’s business any more deeply than we are. For the slides showed, among other things, that the income disparity between the poorest and the richest in the US is much larger than in Canada, which seems to many of us a distinctly negative feature of US society which can be attributed to the greater numbers of Master’s students with the same justice as the larger American per capita GDP. So let’s have a discussion of Master’s programs and their potential social benefits that is conducted with a greater degree of seriousness. Might our Master’s of Public Health help maintain important advantages Canada has over the US, for instance in the much lower infant mortality rate among the poorest members of each society? If so, count me as a supporter.*

I think it’s time for a wider discussion of these matters. If you have something to say, there are some venues for doing so. David Wang reports in his editorial about adjustments FAUW will be making to the discussion pages in the electronic *Forum*, so that it can be accessed by regular faculty, academic librarians, contract faculty, administrators — anyone with access to the Online Forum — without a password. There is also *UW Opinion*, which can be read also by non-academic staff and students.

---

\* The annual planning retreat for senior administrators held at the Kempenfelt Conference Centre on Lake Simcoe.

## Editorial

*David Wang, Electrical and Computer Engineering*

Like most professors, I seem to be spending more and more time pursuing elusive grants to support my research. As with most faculty members with ever-shrinking time-lines, it never fails that the final pieces of these documents tend to come together at the very last minute. I usually fill in my personal information form last and, probably due to my advanced age and senility, I always find myself scrambling to send out emails to my grad students to ask them permission to include their names in my grant application due to privacy laws. I find this extremely ironic as these documents are supposed to be confidential and it certainly would not take a rocket scientist to look at my publications to figure out who my graduate students are. Nevertheless, this tedious task must be done if I am to have a successful grant proposal.

I also recently received a reminder absolutely never to put names with marks up in public places. This includes handing back assignments so now every assignment must be redistributed back to the students without a glimpse of a violation of the almighty privacy laws.

I have also noticed recently that more and more people have very intimate knowledge of my finances, usually culminating in a statement like “gee, that’s pretty good money you make, considering you only teach a couple of courses a year”. Because we are all public servants, we end up having to justify our existence to those who do a google-search on our university site in order to dig up our annual salary. Now, I really do believe in being accountable to the taxpayers so

disclosure of some form is appropriate. I have to also admit to using this resource occasionally out of curiosity about how others at our institution are doing. However, isn’t it strange that, if we do not get approval from our graduate students to put their name on our grant application, that we must write something like “Masters student, thesis topic of robotics, hired by a local automation firm” in order to keep the person anonymous. Now, I certainly don’t recall giving anyone permission to put my name down along with my salary figure in a public forum. Should not my privacy also be protected? Could we not put “Electrical Engineering professor, \$xxx,xxx” rather than more specific private information? In the past, I have encouraged the FAUW to pursue this matter to see if some simple changes could be made. It is true that the public may object to the anonymity of the information but the default should be the protection of our personal information. If some organization (e.g., the provincial government) is truly offended by this proposed change, then let them hire lawyers to try to change things back to the current practice.

This is just one example of the many double standards we, as professors, often face. As the editor of the FAUW Forum, I would love to chat with anyone about any issue that strikes them as strongly as this one does for me. I would love to hear your vent or rant. Just email or call me and I am always willing to go for a coffee to listen. You can reach me at [dwang@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:dwang@uwaterloo.ca) or x33968. As well, the website is being revamped and the discussion forums will no longer have a pass-

word protection on them. As only those people classified as faculty (FAUW members, senior administrators, church college faculty and others with faculty appointments) and academic librarians can access the FAUW Online Forum, a decision was made to remove this second layer of protection. I will be blocking any content that is inappropriate but, other than that, it will be a free forum for discussion. Please make use of it.

### **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 or its Board of Directors 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.*

### **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](mailto:facassoc@uwaterloo.ca)

Website:

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

## Faculty Concerns at St. Jerome's

*David DeVidi, Philosophy*

In the past few weeks I have been invited to a number of emergency meetings of the St Jerome's University Faculty Association. Each of these meetings was called on short notice, but nevertheless each was attended by most of the faculty members at SJU and, taking into account that some professors are on leave and so far from campus, by a considerable majority.

The discussions at these meetings made it very clear that a large proportion of the faculty at SJU are deeply concerned about recent developments there. These professors are fundamentally concerned to defend two bedrock principles that distinguish universities from other institutions, including other educational institutions—collegial governance and academic freedom—and it is clear that they feel that there is important reason to worry about both.

My own summary of the general tenor of discussion in the

meetings is this: the faculty at SJU generally love the institution and are proud of the fact that SJU is widely regarded as one of Canada's top Catholic universities.

This reputation is in no small part due to the vibrant and varied intellectual climate of the place, which has allowed SJU to attract and retain many excellent scholars and teachers, and to the collegial methods of decision making (through the aptly named College Council) that have evolved there over time. The SJU faculty are not averse to change that will improve the University. But the principles of academic freedom guarantee the right to criticize the institution, and in particular to follow their conscience when it tells them that they must speak up against change that is not in the interest of the University. There is also a strong feeling that, being federated with the University of Waterloo, SJU should follow the enlightened policy of UW that

guarantees academic freedom (and so a similar right to speak up critically and honestly about things the University does) to non-academic staff.

I am sure that this brief report will be frustrating to some readers because of the lack of detail. I have resorted to generalizations because the FAUW members at SJU feel that it is in the best interests of SJU (and so of its faculty), at this stage, to provide the greatest possible latitude for constructive engagement with the SJU Administration and Board of Governors on these matters, and that going into details now limits that latitude. I feel that it is important that the SJU faculty be the ones steering the process as much as possible, though FAUW will support them in whatever way it can and, where appropriate, intervene directly on issues that have significance that goes beyond SJU.

## Commentary

### Academic Integrity and the *Epistemic Capacities* of Senate

*Colin Farrelly, Political Science*

I would like to commend FAUW President David Devidi for bringing to the fore the importance of the business of Senate in his insightful editorial "Senate Matters". I would like to expand and supplement his reflections by offering some further insights into the importance of having transparent and inclusive faculty input in the designing and approving of new graduate programs at UW.

As Devidi notes, in recent years some new graduate pro-

grams have been approved by Senate despite the fact that they were not vetted by the usual faculty-based approval procedures. These developments raise serious concerns for all faculty, and students, at UW. Please permit me to explain why.

It's easy to complain about the rules and procedures that are all too common place in institutions of various kinds. From governments and workplaces to the family, there are different rules and

practices that have evolved over time (some for good reasons, others for spurious reasons). And these procedures are often very cumbersome for those who face the task of satisfying these administrative hurdles. In such cases the costs of the burdens of administration are all too apparent (e.g. "How many forms do I have to fill out!"). But what is not always apparent is what the *costs of overriding or ignoring* such proce-

*(Continued on page 6)*

(Continued from page 5)

dures are. In other words, it would be a mistake to seek to contravene established procedures on the short-term insight that such procedures impose burdens on those seeking to ratify changes without considering what the wider implications (including *costs*) will be of the rule “dispel with procedures when they obstruct the things we want changed”.

Don't get me wrong. Sometimes rules and procedures have no redeeming qualities, and in such cases they should be rightfully discarded. But you have to pick your fights wisely. And I believe it is unwise to discard the procedures that ensure new graduate programs are vetted by diverse and independent *deliberative* bodies. Of course one might ask:

Why not just entrust such decisions to the Administrators of a University? If we believe these individuals are wise people, who care passionately about the University, why not just defer all such decision-making power directly to the Board of Governors who are responsible for the financial wellbeing of the University?

And this is where the issue of the *epistemic capacities* of Senate becomes essential. A well-functioning Senate must draw from a diverse pool of educational and professional expertise.

One danger with limiting Senate decision-making to a select group is what is called the problem of a *limited argument pool*. Empirical experiments have demonstrated that deliberative bodies that are composed of like-minded people often become more extreme in their position (a phenomenon called “group polarization”) because they are more confident that they have considered

all the possible arguments against their position. And so those who believe it is important that the University generate new forms of revenue are likely to become even more extreme in their commitment to this aspiration if they only deliberate and debate with like-minded people.

Determining what constitutes a healthy balance between the academic integrity of a proposed program and its potential to infuse money into the University will not be struck by those who are predominantly concerned about the latter. It's not that the members of the Board of Governors only care about money, but they do not possess the detailed knowledge and judgement necessary to determine what constitutes an *acceptable level* of academic excellence in every distinct new program the University could possibly offer. That is where the input of the faculty charged with teaching and supervising students is absolutely essential. Without the input and oversight of faculty members, the Senate cannot achieve the aims integral to an institution of higher education.

My general point is a popular one in liberal democracies- it's the doctrine of *the separation of powers*. Canadian society does not invest all power in the hands of elected law-makers, nor does it invest all power in the hands of the Courts. These distinct deliberative bodies have their own virtues and vices. Law-makers are elected by, and accountable to, the public. Thus legislatures and executives have many distinct epistemic capacities that officers of the Court lack. For example, legislatures have a better understanding of the diverse concerns of the public (be it healthcare, the environment, etc.) because they campaign for the support of the public. Executives have detailed

knowledge of the financial constraints facing the country. Judges, by contrast, have legal expertise concerning the Constitution and their impartiality serves as a vital oversight on the will of the majority.

A university is very similar. Decision-making should not be limited to elites that lack the diverse expertise needed to ensure quality-control measures are in place for all new programs the University approves. And this is why the input of faculty members is absolutely essential. Of course this risks giving dissenters the opportunity to express their opposition to proposed new programs (thus ruffling the feathers of powerful people in the Administration). But we should not be so arrogant as to think that such dissenters couldn't actually convey some important information or insights that have been overlooked. Without the opportunity for detailed discussion and debate about new programs there is no way of ensuring that we strike a healthy balance between the academic integrity of a program and its potential to bring in new money.

Finally, to exclude faculty members from such decision-making is counterproductive. For faculty are unlikely to feel passionate and excited about being involved in new programs that they perceive to be enforced “from above”. They are, however, more likely to be supportive of programs that they feel their colleagues have vetted and endorsed. And I'm sure the students paying tuition for these new programs would like to know that the faculty members of the University actually supported, indeed played a vital role in designing, such programs.