
FAUW FORUM

FACULTY ASSOCIATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO NEWSLETTER

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Number 95, Summer 1999

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY FRED MCCOURT

In principle this is the time of year when I normally attempt to catch up on all of the items that I have postponed from the previous two terms. In principle, I say. It seems that the Spring Term has its own momentum and its own agenda, so here it is past mid-July and I haven't dealt with anywhere near half of those postponed items! Perhaps those of you who have done the same have fared better than I (at least I can hope so).

In my April/May report I told you that our Memorandum of Agreement negotiating teams were once again meeting with the Board of Governors' negotiating teams. I am pleased to report to you that the negotiating teams on what we had earlier referred to as the "Fraud and Misconduct" article, now renamed to "Integrity in Scholarly Research", reached agreement on a large part of the article prior to breaking for the summer. It is possible that with one or two additional meetings this September the article will be ready for adoption.

The second negotiating team, dealing with the article on annual performance evaluation procedures had a productive first meeting at the end of June, and will resume negotiations in September. The Board of Governors' team has proposed a broadening of these negotiations to include salary policy, and we have agreed to consider their proposals when they have them ready this fall. I do not anticipate completion of these negotiations until well into the fall term.

Only after negotiations have been completed on both articles will they be sent out together to all faculty members and to the UW Board of Governors for ratification and approval.

The Faculty Relations Committee will continue to deal with proposed revisions to the UW Promotion and Tenure Policies, 46 and 53, when it resumes in September. Revisions to these policies, if approved by FRC, should be in the policy pipeline by the end of the fall term. I am pleased to note that we have actually managed during this past two years to clear the policy logjam that had accumulated over a number of years. This is evidence of a continuing good working relationship that has been developed between the FAUW and the UW administration.

This issue of the *Forum* contains short articles by Ian Macdonald and Len Guelke summarizing the outcomes of the questionnaire that the FAUW issued to learn your views on two issues: (i) the possibility of improving the early retirement scheme at UW, and (ii) the compulsory retirement age. Our thanks to the 256 of you who responded to the questionnaire. As we felt that this information should be made available sooner, rather than later, and since we felt that you should be aware that, partly on the basis of the results of the questionnaire, and partly because of the extensive interest in an improved early retirement scheme amongst members of both the UW Staff Association

INSIDE:

RETIREMENT SURVEY RESULTS.....	3
MAKE COURSE EVALUATIONS PUBLIC?.....	5
LETTER TO THE EDITOR.....	7
OCUFA PRESIDENT'S REPORT	7
HUNTOONS	8

and CUPE Local 793, the presidents of the three UW employee groups have jointly requested that the University Pension & Benefits Committee examine the possibility of using a portion of the current pension plan surplus to improve the existing early retirement scheme in a way that all employee groups are still treated on the same footing. This would be accomplished through a benefit that would provide roughly the same percentage improvement for the early retirement of any UW employee. We have received an initial reply to our proposal from the Chair of the UW Pension & Benefits Committee, Vice President Academic and Provost, Jim Kalbfleisch, saying that he will present the proposal to the P&B Committee for its consideration at one of its upcoming fall meetings.

You may also be aware that the UW Federation of Students has initiated a study of the possibility of the introduction at UW of what is referred to at other universities, such as Queen's, as a "Student Companion". Such a document, available either in hard copy or via the internet, presents the results of student surveys on various undergraduate courses that are offered at an institution. It is intended to be used by students to help them choose their program of courses, and is further intended to help them find the right courses and instructors for their individual needs. The undergraduate student representatives to Senate have initiated discussions of the role of course surveys at Senate, and the executive of the Federation of Students has welcomed the formation of a FAUW committee to study the role and nature of faculty and course evaluations at UW. In my message in the April/May issue of the *Forum* I called for three or four volunteers to serve on this committee. At this stage we have three volunteers who have indicated their willingness to serve, namely Professors Catherine Schryer (English), Len Guelke (Geography), and Wing-Ki Liu (Physics). Following an initial meeting

in early June, the committee members decided that as the evaluation procedures appear to differ markedly from one faculty to another, it would be more appropriate to have an additional three volunteers to work with them, specifically one each from the faculties of Applied Health Studies, Engineering, and Mathematics. Thus, if you might like to join this committee (which plans to meet several times during the upcoming Fall Term), please contact one of the current committee members or leave your name with Pat Moore at the FAUW office (X3787). In order that you will know precisely what the Federation of Students hopes to achieve with their proposed "UW Student Companion" Veronica Chau, the Federation of Students Vice President, Education, agreed to write a short article to outline the Federation goals. We are grateful to Veronica for her willingness to write an article for this issue of the *Forum*.

This issue of the *Forum* also contains an update of what is happening on the provincial level in Ontario via a report from the OCUFA President, Professor Deborah Flynn. This is the second of a series of reports provided by Professor Flynn in order to bring to our attention what OCUFA does for us and to make us aware of issues that go beyond the concerns that may arise at a single university. While OCUFA does a significant amount of lobbying on its own on behalf of university professors, it also coordinates its activities on behalf of higher education in general with the Council of Ontario Universities and with the Ontario Federation of Students. Professor Flynn's reports will keep us informed of these various activities, and on their many successes and their (few) failures.

Finally, I would like to introduce you to a UW cartoonist, Andrew Hunt of the History Department, who has agreed to supply the *Forum* from time to time with academic-oriented cartoons. This issue brings you the first of what I hope will be many fine "Huntoons".

Editorial Board

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Faculty Association Survey on Retirement

PART I

ONGOING EARLY RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN ENHANCEMENTS

*by Ian Macdonald
Chemical Engineering*

Should there be an improved regular early retirement component in the University of Waterloo pension plan which would be available on a permanent continuing basis to all UW employees? Based on the responses to the recent questionnaire sent by FAUW to all faculty members, faculty clearly find the idea attractive in principle.

Responses to the questionnaire were received from 256 faculty – a response rate of about 36.6%.

Those responding are overwhelmingly positive. 241 respondents (94.1%) support having an ongoing enhanced early retirement component in the Pension Plan. Only 10 respondents (3.9%) oppose the idea and the other 5 (2.0%) have no opinion.

Of the 241 faculty who support a permanent improvement to the early retirement component of the Plan, 172 (71.2%) believe it should be available without discrimination to all faculty retiring after age 55, and 33 (13.8%) opposed the enhancement being available to those under age 60. The other 36 respondents (15.0%) support an enhancement for those retiring at age 60 or older and have no opinion on whether or not the enhancement should be available to those wishing to retire between ages 55 and 60. Overall, this indicates a strong preference that an improved early retirement plan should be available to all those eligible for the current early retirement plan.

Last year, a petition asking for an ongoing early retirement plan, which was initiated by CUPE and signed mainly by staff (though a few faculty saw and signed it as well), received about 800 signatures. Clearly, the idea of an enhanced early retirement scheme is attractive to staff also.

Given this broad support and in light of the fact that the Plan currently has a surplus near the maximum permitted by Revenue Canada despite the most recent im-

provements to the Pension Plan and the recent contribution holidays, it is worthwhile for the Faculty Association, the Staff Association, and CUPE with the assistance of the University P&B Committee to investigate specific enhancements which will be fair, equitable, affordable, and with eligibility criteria which are not biased in favour (or against) one of the employee groups relative to the others. Realistically, the University P&B Committee ought to be ready to bring forward a specific proposal for the consideration of faculty and staff in the fall of 1999.

The current permanent early retirement component allows any employee to retire early between the ages of 55 and 65, but with a reduced pension relative to the defined or formula pension. The reduction, which most individuals regard as a significant disincentive when considering early retirement, is one-third of 1% for each month by which the retirement age is below age 65 but above age 60, and one-half of 1% for each month by which the retirement age is below age 60.

Obviously, to be an improvement, a revised Plan would have to provide a better pension than that provided by the current early retirement provisions of the Plan – that is, it would provide a smaller reduction from the formula pension.

PART II

RETIREMENT AFTER AGE 65

*by Len Guelke
Geography*

There were sharply divided responses on the questions relating to regular faculty having the option to work beyond 65. Of the 256 people responding to the FAUW's survey 97 (38%) were opposed to the idea that the retirement age should be raised, while 141 (55%) considered that it should be extended. Of this group 51 respondents favoured mandatory retirement at 68, 37 at 70 and 53 thought there should be no limit. The respondents favouring the status quo were mainly concerned about issues of faculty renewal and ensuring weak professors would not continue in their positions indefinitely. Respondents wishing to see a rise in the mandatory age of retirement pointed out that many professors were fully capable of continuing active and productive academic careers beyond the age of 65.

SOME OF THE COMMENTS OF RESPONDENTS

1. INDIVIDUALS FAVOURING AN EXTENSION OF THE RETIREMENT AGE:

TO 68 ONLY

- There must be a means to ease people out gently and gracefully before their minds and bodies disintegrate beyond the point of no repair.
- I believe there should be a limit on the age at which one can still expect to be paid from public funds. Retirement does not preclude continuing pursuit of one's academic interests and it provides opportunities for younger academics.
- In principle, and other things being equal, this would seem to be a good thing and is possible at many universities in the US. (At this time I personally don't think I would choose it though, although that could change.)
- Only with the permission of the University. I am concerned about people taking salary for little work. A few members of the university faculty take full salary but spend much time consulting. I am not happy that they should continue to take advantage of tenure.

NO LIMIT

- Retirement options should be flexible, not restrictive or prohibitive. Leave the decision to the individual faculty member as to when to retire. Assuming he or she is performing satisfactorily in their job (as objectively assessed during annual performance reviews), then the retirement decision should rest with the faculty member.
- Discrimination by age is repugnant.
- It is unfair and discriminatory to force faculty, who wish to continue to work, to retire.
- But the University must have a mechanism for terminating them for under-performance. I'd like to see the faculty member drawing a pension, and the University's financial obligation being merely to supplement the pension

income. This would greatly reduce the burden on the University.

2. INDIVIDUALS FAVOURING THE STATUS QUO:

- The continuation of employment of faculty members beyond age 65 should be granted only on the basis of academic productivity, creativity and ongoing service. If for example a faculty member cannot or hardly be replaced why force her/him to retire
- Please! We urgently need *new blood!!!*
- Everyone should retire at 65!
- Faculty after this age can continue as sessional or adjunct. I really feel younger faculty should be hired. Who would be responsible for telling a prof they are "too old" and not contributing enough?
- I feel strongly that all faculty should be *required* to retire at 65. (In fact I once resigned from the faculty association over this issue). Opportunities for young faculty are very important. However, in advocating forced retirement, I am not averse to the development of ongoing relationships (e.g. sessional lecturer) where they are in the mutual interest of the former faculty member and the university (perhaps at a reduced rate of compensation).
- Creating vacancies for new faculty is essential.
- After retirement adjunct appointment is the mechanism to permit continued teaching/research for those who wish to continue.

3. No opinion to questions:

- This is a tough one for me. I believe in the principle of working past 65 – particularly for those who continue to be enthusiastic and productive. However, I also believe that the academy needs to refresh itself with younger people and people working into their late 60's and 70's prevent some of this from happening. I also worry that some older colleagues (certainly not many) are no longer productive teachers and researchers.

What students are saying about course evaluations

by Veronica Chau
VP Education, Federation of Students

Course evaluations have been the subject of a great deal of debate on this campus, especially within the recent months following a presentation made by the Federation of Students at a Senate meeting. I have been asked by Prof. Fred McCourt to submit an article to the Faculty Association of the University of Waterloo Newsletter on this topic in response to recent activity by the Federation of Students. I would like to use this opportunity to discuss student evaluation of instruction, its validity, reliability and potential biases. To do this, I will be summarizing the findings of a research paper published by the University of Calgary Students' Union entitled "Student Evaluation of Instruction: Research Implication and Potential Application". I would also like to inform the faculty about the aims of the Federation of Students in this area and invite feedback and open discourse.

The concept of student evaluation of instruction is not new. There are reports from medieval European universities of student committees responsible for providing feedback to the rector on the quality of teaching. At some institutions, the salaries of professors were dependent upon student opinion, as the students would pay their fees directly to the instructor.

Here at the University of Waterloo, a comprehensive system exists to obtain student feedback through administering surveys at the end of each term. The results are used for annual performance reviews and merit pay increases as well as for nominations for tenure appointments and teaching awards. Before we consider any further uses of this data, we must first investigate the reliability and validity of this data as well as any potential biases.

What, one might ask, do student evaluations measure? The ultimate goal of teaching is to foster understanding of and appreciation for concepts and ideas. Thus the extent to which the students have learned is a clear way of assessing the effectiveness of an instructor's methods. It would be reasonable to expect that those students who receive more effective instruction will have a better understanding of concepts, which in turn would be

reflected in higher student achievement. If it can be shown that student evaluations positively correlate with student achievement, then the evaluations themselves can be said to be a good indicator of the overall effectiveness of the instructor. Studies have shown that these two variables are in fact correlated. Cohen (1981) found that student achievement is positively related with the results from student questionnaire questions about Overall Instructor (0.43) and Overall Course (0.47).

I can hear the warning bells going off in some minds as they read this, as they wonder how one differentiates between high student achievement and lenient grading.

There are two interpretations of the correlation between student achievement and student evaluations. One is that students will reward instructors from whom they expect lenient marking with high scores on evaluations.

The other interpretation is that the student's level of motivation combined with the effectiveness of the instructor will result in quality learning on behalf of the student, and by extension, higher achievement. Most of the research tends to support the second view over the first. For example, Howard and Maxwell (1980, 1982) found that when they controlled for prior student motivation and student progress rates the covariation between expected grades and class-average overall ratings was eliminated. They arrived at the conclusion that "... the influence of student motivation upon student performance, grades, and satisfaction appears to be a more potent contributor to the covariation between grades and satisfaction than does the direct contaminating effect of grades upon student satisfaction."¹ Furthermore, researcher H.G. Murray states that "...research evidence provides no clear support for the claim that student evaluation of teaching has led to grade inflation or lowering of academic standards."²

One way to assess the validity of student evaluations is to compare them with other methods of evaluating the instructor. The argument has been made that students are not qualified to pass sound judgement on the teaching methods of instructors. To test this hypothesis, Murray

¹G.S. Howard and S.E. Maxwell, "The correlation between student satisfaction and grades: A case of mistaken causation?" *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 1980 December; Vol 72(6): 818.

²H.G. Murray, "Does evaluation of teaching lead to improvement of teaching?" submitted to *International Journal of Academic Development*, 1996, 19.

(1983) conducted a study in which trained external observers evaluated a group of 54 professors who had received various ratings in the past. Each professor received eighteen to twenty-four evaluations with six to eight trained observers attending three separate lectures.

The ratings from the students were quite similar to those from the trained instructors with the median reliability for the average response for each instructor of 0.77. Other studies have reached parallel conclusions: Hines, Cruikshank and Kennedy (1982) found high correlation between external observer ratings on twenty-nine clarity-related teaching behaviors and both student achievement and student ratings. A further study by Land and Combs (1981) found that student ratings and achievement are substantially correlated with clarity-related behaviors by instructors.

Here at UW we should consider the following: course evaluations are conducted in the majority of undergraduate courses. In some faculties, such as Mathematics and Engineering, the results from these questionnaires are made available to students. In others, the results are not made public. Consequently, while some students have access to this information, others must rely on rumors and hearsay, which can be much more damaging to the reputation of courses and instructors than the results from course evaluations. Rumors and hearsay are peppered with personal biases and can be quite arbitrary. The results from course evaluations however paint a more accurate picture of the overall learning experience.

The Federation of Students recently conducted a poll among undergraduate students to determine their views on this issue. The preliminary results show that a clear majority of students stated that if the results from course evaluations were made available at pre-registration then it would help them to avoid dropping/adding courses in the first week of the term. Most students stated that they would use the information when selecting courses and for long-term planning. Clearly, having this information would help students to make better-informed decisions.

The Federation of Students also conducted focus groups to gather more in-depth information on what the students would like to see done with course evaluations. Preliminary results indicate that they would like to see an online catalogue accessible only to those with authorization (i.e. only UW students, faculty, etc.). They would also like to see measures put into place to add context to the data released such as an opportunity for professors to add their own remarks.

Based on the results from the Federation of Students polling and focus groups, we would like to see the university community endorse the following principles:

- 1) Course evaluations should occur in all undergraduate classes.
- 2) The numerical data from the results of course evaluations should be made available to students.
- 3) Students should be responsible for the dissemination of this information.

Overall, there is strong support among the students for this project. They point to schools such as the University of Toronto, University of Western Ontario, Queen's University, University of British Columbia, and Dalhousie University, where similar programs are already in place. This also forces us, students and faculty alike, to ask ourselves why we, as a university that is regarded to be the most innovative school in Canada, have yet to do so.

We invite and encourage your feedback on this matter. Please send your replies to fedyped@feds.uwaterloo.ca or to Veronica Chau c/o Federation of Students, Student Life Centre. We would also be happy to provide you with the full text of the document that was used to help write this piece "Student Evaluation of Instruction: Research Implications and Potential Application".

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Letter to the Editor

The following was written in response to Ed Vrscay's letter to the Editor in the April/May Forum concerning the evolution of salaries of administrators and faculty at UW.

Dear Editor,

If the combined salaries of cohabiting UW employees were also taken into account for the annual disclosure of over 100k\$/year salaries, the size of Ed Vrscay's stratosphere and ionosphere would increase considerably at the expense of the troposphere.

Tom Fahidy
Chemical Engineering

OCUFA President's Report

by Deborah Flynn
Nipissing University

It has been a very good year for OCUFA! All of the initiatives outlined at the beginning of the year have been carried out and goals met. First and foremost was my goal of raising the profile of OCUFA through constant and aggressive lobbying not only with the government, media, the public and other relevant groups but with our own membership. Making the concerns and needs of faculty and librarians around the province known and

maintaining and enhancing the quality of higher education in Ontario is after all the mandate of OCUFA. I believe we have made great progress in this area by being persistent, firm and very well informed when meeting with government officials, critics and media and having a clear and well supported message to deliver.

On March 17 we met with the Deputy Minister Veronica Lacey in the morning and in the afternoon met with Education Minister Dave Johnson. In both meetings we were able to articulate our concerns and expectations we have for the university system.

We have opened up our lines of communication with our own membership through vehicles such as the new Forum and the OCUFA Report. Our web site is informative and current and well visited.

I have made a spirited attempt to visit each individual association and update them on our activity. Since our last Board meeting I have had the pleasure of visiting Guelph, Western, and Wilfrid Laurier. Henry Mandelbaum visited McMaster University and also met with the Hamilton Spectator Editorial Board.

The last year has seen OCUFA cited regularly on issues dealing with post secondary education in the Toronto Star, the National Post, local papers around the province and many campus papers. There have been radio interviews on CBC and local channels. We are now a source of information and a definitive voice for professors in Ontario. Of course, there has been no better motivator than the June 3rd provincial election. The election has not only given us the opportunity to get our message across for the need of a well funded, an affordable, a high quality, university system but it has also given us the chance to deliver these much needed services to our members.

Apart from raising our profile, our lobbying has, even more importantly, had an impact on government policy formulation in Ontario. Although it is most often next to impossible to see the direct results of lobbying we all know it is important, necessary and does have consequences. However, as an example, I think it is safe to say that the persistent lobbying by OCUFA for better out of country OHIP coverage for our faculty who study abroad influenced the decision of the Ministry of Health to extend the coverage so significantly that it now ceases to be an issue for academics.

We have also managed this year to strengthen our relationship with various other groups in the university

sector (CFS, OUSA, COUSA and CUPE, Friends of Ontario Universities). By working together on a common message to the public there develops a new strength, trust and credibility among the coalition partners. This was seen in the media blitz created around the signing of the pledges to raise funding to the national average by the Liberal and New Democratic Party.

The energy and creativity that went into the election preparation has been unprecedented by OCUFA. There was a tremendous amount of information given to local associations in the Election Kits. Advertising was arranged for both voice and print media. On March 27-28 OCUFA organized a media workshop to prepare our members in dealing with the media. Vice President Henry Jacek went on the election trail organizing and encouraging local associations to become actively involved during the campaign by lobbying their local politicians and setting up all candidates meetings on post secondary education.

Much of the funds that enabled us to be active and visible came from some individual associations and I therefore would like to congratulate those who recognized the importance of taking advantage of this opportunity to get our message across in as many ways as possible and for having the faith in OCUFA to carry out such an endeavour.

I will state categorically that OCUFA is the most active, most stable and most productive provincial association in the Canadian university system. Our preparation for this election would not have been possible without the commitment of our membership organizations both in terms of monetary contributions and time. Nor would this have been possible without the dedication and hard work of Henry Mandelbaum, the OCUFA staff, the Vice President Henry Jacek and the Executive. I thank you all for helping make OCUFA what I knew it could be.

Have a safe and happy summer.

FAUW Forum

The FAUW Forum is a service for the UW faculty sponsored by the Association. It seeks to promote exchange of ideas, foster open debate on issues, publish a wide and balanced spectrum of views, and inform members about current Association matters. 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. Please send items to the members of the Editorial Board, or to the Editor. Current and past issues of the Forum are posted on the FAUW website. 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.

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