

**Staff Association Area Reps Meeting
Minutes of June 11, 2015**

Present:

Barb Blundon	Christine Gillis Bilton	Tom Graham
Darlene Ryan	Jason Gorrie	Murray Zink
Dianne Foreman	Rose Vogt	Gail Spencer
Katherine Maclean	Michael Herz	Stephanie Filsinger
Katy Wong	Robyn Landers	Theresa Bauer
Luanne McGinley	Sue Oestreich	Kathleen St. Laurent
Lawrence Folland	Carlos Mendes	Sarah Landy
	Theresa Dam	Melissa Zapletal

1. Information session on issues impacting the future of the UWSA

Carlos Mendes led a presentation on the UWSA membership level problem. (There have been a few similar sessions already.) Membership level needs to be over 50% to maintain recognition by and participation with UW administration. Membership is declining, and rate of decline is expected to increase in the near future (e.g. due to retirements of older staff members). Many steps have been taken to try to attract members, without much success. If membership falls below 50%, UWSA would no longer be the voice of staff with the administration. No more involvement on committees such as PACSC, Pension and Benefits, etc. UW is the only non-unionized staff group of this size in the province, so it seems likely that unions would try again to unionize UW, as happened recently at Queens when their staff association membership fell below 50%. Other outcomes are possible too.

Suggestions include strengthening the staff Memorandum of Agreement to gain parity with the Faculty Association and CUPE (e.g. by enabling binding arbitration), and making staff association dues a mandatory condition of employment, as the Faculty Association did when they had this problem many years ago.

Q: Why are people not joining, and how would UWSA dues compare to union dues?

A: Complacency: people don't feel the need to change anything. Older staff think the MOA is weak. UWSA is 0.28% of salary; CUPE is 2.45%.

Q: In what ways would the MOA be made stronger? When would it come into effect?

A: UWSA and Administration have agreed in principle that the MOA can be strengthened. We are looking at adding similar language to the FAUW MOA when appropriate. The largest change needed to strengthen our MOA is the ability to have access to 3rd party arbitration when we reach an impasse.

Q: We have a new Provost and a new Associate Provost of HR. How do these new people view UWSA? Does it seem like a good time for us to act on this?

A: Both the Provost and AP HR have had lots of unions to deal with at previous positions, and are supportive of a strong UWSA. It is a good time to act.

Q: What about unions that separate management from workers?

A: Yes some people are uncomfortable with that one way or the other. FAUW has avoided the separation; e.g. department chairs are still represented by FAUW, but they have separated Deans and senior Management. It is likely that we will have some people excluded based on conflict of interest; we will have to work on these exclusions with the administration

Q: There is a perception of the UWSA being weak while a union would have more clout versus the UW administration. The "revolving door" nature of UWSA president's position versus experienced UW administration also seems weak.

A1: UWSA has a very good record of handling Policy 33 cases on behalf of staff (including managers).

A2: Mandatory dues would enable more training and legal consultation etc. The model of incoming, current, and past president helps continuity. Compared to other universities, UW staff are doing quite well without a union.

Q: Despite cooperative top administration, and favourable legal opinion, why is communication (email) by UWSA still being blocked due to CASL concerns? Also, say more about what representation means.

A1: Representation already exists: staff can bring a representative to discussions with management.

A2: The email communication roadblock is coincidental, i.e. it's because of CASL, not because of trying to stifle UWSA on this topic. Secretariat is being very conservative on CASL.

Q: What would be the optimum amount of dues if everyone were forced to participate? Has there been discussion about what percentage of vote participation would be needed to pass?

A1: Discussing with legal advisers. What is required to pass is one thing; what is preferred may be another. Can see both reducing dues a bit thanks to larger revenue base, and also taking advantage of increased resources to offer more services and accommodate the needs of more members.

A2: A union needs 50% of the people who vote, not of the eligible voters.

Q: Why UWSA formed in first place?

A: Pay equity was a big issue. Preferential hiring; lack of process; no voice with administration like the faculty had.

Q: What if UWSA no longer exists?

A1: No voice for staff with UW administration. Do you want the environment we have now, and if so, is it fair how it works now with representation by the president and committees for all staff despite only some staff paying dues? Or do you want to abandon what we have now, and let whatever happens next happen?

A2: In a corporate model, you would go individually to HR to deal with issues, and policy would be

dictated by the administration without input from staff.

Q: What about using means other than email to reach long-time staff, since CASL supposedly prevents email?

A: Yes, that's fine, but we need a permanent solution to the membership problem not just a fix for now.

Q: Thanks for the hard work of UWSA directors. Looks like things are heading in a positive direction.

Carlos thanked everyone for attending and encouraged people to spread the word.

Chair: Carlos Mendes

Minutes: RBL