



President's Message

Mark Hudson
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I've been in the UMFA President's office for almost six months now, and while my feet are

more firmly under me, I'm still learning new things on a regular basis. The past few weeks have been especially revelatory. Three weeks ago, our colleagues at Nipissing University went out on strike. Their administration was refusing to return to the table to negotiate. They have a tiny Association, with few resources. They were seeking a settlement that closed their substantial salary gap with comparator institutions, maintained their current faculty complement, and gave faculty a meaningful voice in university governance. Through the CAUT Defense Fund, we've been able to send Michael Shaw and Tom Booth to Nipissing to hear what's at stake, to support NUFA's pickets, and deliver the modest contributions that UMFA has been making to their strike fund. In response to this, UMFA received a thank-you letter from NUFA telling us how important our support was "in this fight we all share." NUFA and Nipissing University have recently come to a tentative agreement, which is a victory for us all.

That's one of my big lessons so far at UMFA. We are far from alone, and that makes a difference. In the midst of the paper blizzard of new policies, procedures, guidelines, and initiatives that are transforming—and not always for the better—our university, I hear from other faculty associations facing their own versions of the blizzard. Administrations across the country are pushing

new governance and budget models, new systems of accounting and classroom scheduling, and in the course of these transformations, paying less heed to the voices of the scholars who really *are* the university. The experience of faculty at Nipissing—the fact that they have so far managed to resist further erosion of collegial governance, compensation, and the full-time complement—shows that when we stand together, we can maintain and even build on those things that make us delight in being academics: the freedom and autonomy to teach, research, collaborate, publish, speak, and participate in running our institution.

What's true at the national level is, I'm learning, also true at the local. Along with our bargaining team and the Executive Director, I have been meeting with constituents across the University over the past month or so (incidentally, if you haven't had a chance to meet with us yet, pester your Board Rep to set up a meeting). It's an excellent thing to get away my corner of campus and hear from colleagues I've never met before. While they have specific issues and concerns, a lot of them are similar across faculties and departments. People are feeling "out of the loop" with regard to their workplace and their working conditions. Systems, protocols, and new rules are dropping without so much as a by-your-leave, never mind informed consent. Workloads are in many cases rising as a result. Maintaining control over our work and our working conditions—having a meaningful voice in the present and future of our university—is a widely shared concern, and one we can best address together.

Continued next page...

President's Message continued from previous page

In addition to the shared concerns about the institution, standing together also helps protect individuals: real people; your colleagues and mine. I knew this in the abstract, but I have a better understanding seeing it work day-to-day. The Collective Agreement is a shield, and one that UMFA members and staff built carefully, if not perfectly, over the years. I initially got involved with UMFA partly because I think unions generally make a positive contribution to society—weekends not the least among them. Not everyone agrees with me on that—maybe not you. But I didn't know a lot about the specifics of things: how grievances work, which article of the CA did what, the myriad ways our staff protects our interests. Having been here a while now, as a Board

member, as Vice-President and now as President, when I say that I am learning that we are stronger when we stand together, I mean that in a very pragmatic way. Every day I watch our grievance officers and professional staff use the Collective Agreement—the product of years of struggle, reasonable compromise, negotiation, victories, and standing together—to protect our colleagues from the deterioration of their working conditions, from unreasonable discipline, from the theft of their time, and from countless other assaults large and small, where, in the absence of that shield, peoples' lives would be worse.

Working together, nationally, provincially, and locally - it makes us what we are.

Bargaining Preparation

Bargaining preparations are in full swing at the UMFA office. The bargaining survey went out to all bargaining unit members last month and the results were discussed at a recent meeting of the Collective Agreement Committee (CAC). The results will be used throughout the process of developing proposals. The CAC has also organized sub-committees that will provide support and feedback on proposals.

Multiple constituency meetings have been held and

more are planned for the weeks ahead. These meetings are an important opportunity for Members to meet face-to-face with the UMFA Executive and Bargaining team to discuss issues of concern in your department and faculty.

If you haven't already had a meeting in your constituency, please contact your Board Representative, or the UMFA office at FAUM@umfa.ca.

Alternative Budget Launch

By: Janet Morrill, VP UMFA

For a decade now, UMFA has established that the University's austerity campaigns are not motivated by funding shortfalls. Rather, they have been created by the administration's choices to stockpile cash, erect buildings, and launch costly advertising campaigns. This manufactured austerity has resulted in academic salaries that are in the bottom of the U15 (the universities that are considered Canada's top research-intensive institutions), repeated cuts to faculty budgets, increased class sizes and reduced course offerings, and

administrative tasks downloaded to faculty.

UMFA has repeatedly questioned those choices. Do they reflect the wishes of the university's important stakeholders? Have they been the result of an open, transparent, collegial governance process? We do not think so.

This cause has been taken up by the University of Manitoba Student Action Network (UMSAN).

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(Continued from previous page) UMSAN, along with other partners such as the Canadian Federation of students, formed the “Stop the Cuts” coalition last year. Now, with funding from the Manitoba Organization of Faculty Associations (MOFA), they are launching a project to produce Alternative University Budgets for the U of M, the University of Winnipeg, and Université de St-Boniface.

The purpose of the Alternative University Budget (AUB) is to show that it’s possible to create a budget through a genuine process of consultation with students, academics, other university employees, and members of the community at large.

A rally to launch the AUB initiative took place in Senate Chambers on October 22. The session included an UMFA

presentation on U of M finances, and presentations by students on the impact of fee increases on international students and ways that students can get involved.

The rally was very well attended, but for this campaign to be successful we need a broad base of support and wide participation in the AUB consultations. We urge all UMFA members to support UMSAN’s Alternative Budget Process. Please participate in the AFB consultations and urge your students to do the same. Display notices of their sessions on your office door, and on your AV screens before class.

Let’s work to make our voices heard, hold the university accountable, and demonstrate what collegial governance really looks like.

How Have the Budget Cuts Impacted You?

The University of Manitoba has launched a massive \$500 million fundraising campaign on the heels of a 4% budget cut that was implemented this year, soon to be followed by another 4% cut. None of the money raised will be used to reverse the cuts.

UMFA wants to hear from you on how the cuts have impacted your work. What changes have you noticed in your classrooms, in your labs, your departments and faculties? Have you noticed a change in the student experience? Tell us first hand so we can share it with the university community and the public at large.

As we head into a bargaining year, academics and staff at the University need to be heard more than ever. We need to be recognized as essential to the success of the University and all students who pass through its doors! Cutting budgets and resources for academics, while fundraising millions at the exact same time, simply makes no sense.

Please send your stories to umfa-communications@umfa.ca. If you wish to keep your story anonymous, please indicate so in your message.

Becoming an UMFA Member

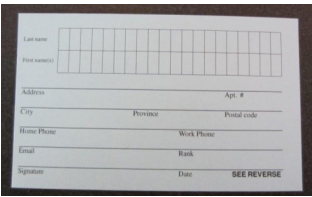
Question: I was recently asked if I’d signed a blue UMFA membership card. I thought I already was an UMFA member. What does the blue card mean?

Answer: All full-time members of the academic staff and all full-time librarians at the University of Manitoba are members of the **bargaining unit**. This means that they are covered by the terms of the Collective Agreement and required to pay dues to UMFA.

Members of the bargaining unit can choose to join UMFA by signing a blue membership card. Signing a card and becoming an **UMFA member** allows individuals to participate in the governance of the Association, to elect

colleagues to office, to be elected to office, to serve on committees, and to vote on proposals for collective bargaining. The vast majority of members of the bargaining unit are members of UMFA.

There is no cost to become an UMFA member. You can sign a card at any time by arranging to come to the UMFA office. UMFA staff also bring cards to events such as the Annual General Meeting and to any other membership meeting.



Delayed Merit Awards Process

UMFA has received a number of inquiries regarding the Merit Awards process to determine Merit Award recipients for their achievements during the 2014 calendar year. There had been no announcement from the University this year inviting applications from eligible UMFA members and no meeting of the two Joint Committees charged with administering the awards. This announcement usually goes out in February, together with information on the application and decision process.

UMFA has contacted the University on a number of

occasions regarding the delay and has resolved the issue: a callout for applications has been made, and Members have an opportunity to apply before year end. The goal is to have the Joint Committees complete their work before year end.

If you have any questions, please contact Greg Flemming, Executive Director, at 474-8282 or gflemming@umfa.ca.

Budget Cuts Out of Tune with Students' Needs

On October 28, over 100 students in the Faculty of Music met to discuss the budget cuts that have been levied against music programs at the University. The debate covered the reasons behind the University's cuts, the effects on both current and incoming students, and the pressures forced upon academics and staff. The meeting concluded with a motion condemning the University's actions, a call to organize further resistance, and a demand to return funding to 2014-15 levels.



Recent Events Against Budget Cuts

On November 12, members of the UMFA Executive organized a brief presentation on cuts, academic freedom, and job security. The next round of budget cuts is unlikely to be the last, and Canadian university presidents have made it clear that they support a notion of academic freedom that is much weaker than what is currently protected by our collective agreement. The discussions included focus on the rights that UMFA Members have and what we can learn from the U of M administration's 1995 attempt to make it easy to lay off tenured academics, which resulted in a strike.



Continued from previous page

On November 24, the University of Manitoba Student Action Network (UMSAN) held another rally speaking out against budget cuts and fee hikes for international students. The event took place in University Centre and featured a fine arts project about the cuts and a speech by an international student about the impact of fee hikes. The group then proceeded to the Engineering Atrium to meet the Board of Directors before their meeting.



Farewell to Linda Guse

On Wednesday, December 16, there will be a holiday party and farewell gathering for former Executive Director Linda Guse. Linda announced her retirement earlier this year, and stepped down from the position on September 1. She has remained on staff since then, helping with the transition of the new ED and completing

several projects. The party starts in the UMFA Boardroom at 4:00. Everyone is invited to join in giving a fond farewell!

UMFA Office Holiday Closure

The UMFA office will close for the Christmas break on Monday, December 14, and re-opens Tuesday, January 5. The staff wish all UMFA members and their families a joyous and relaxing holiday. See you in 2016!



UMFA welcomes your feedback on this newsletter as well as suggestions for future newsletters.

Please email any comments to umfa-communications@umfa.ca.

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