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Teaching Stream Issues - Updates from UTFA

March 14, 2025

Dear Teaching Stream colleagues,

We are writing with some important updates about a few major issues directly related to the rights of Teaching Stream faculty at U of T. First, there are **some issues of concern:**

Exclusion from Full membership in the School of Graduate Studies (SGS)

The Administration has unilaterally decided to phase out its practice of allowing some Teaching Stream faculty Full membership in the School of Graduate Studies (SGS) and begin restricting all faculty in the Teaching Stream to Associate membership at best. UTFA grieved, arguing that this exclusion is arbitrary and discriminatory as it is based solely on the fact that we are in the Teaching Stream, not because of our qualifications, abilities, or what the best fit would be for the graduate students. We see these kinds of exclusions as artificial constraints on our work and our academic freedom. The Administration denied the grievance, and UTFA has referred the matter to be heard by an arbitrator.

Exclusion from academic leadership positions

You may recall that UTFA wrote to you almost a year ago about the Administration's exclusion of Teaching Stream faculty from eligibility to serve in certain academic leadership positions (such as Chairs of departments and Directors of centres and institutes). Since we last wrote, the Administration appears to have changed its justification for this exclusion, but is still holding firm to its position that it *can* exclude Teaching Stream from these positions (as it continues to resist almost every effort to move toward equity between the streams). This matter, too, will be heard by an arbitrator.

We think it is important for our members to know that, in these above-mentioned cases, the Administration is spending significant time and money on legal fees and arbitration expenses in its efforts to entrench and even extend grounds for discrimination against Teaching Stream faculty.

On a few other matters, though, there is **some good news** to share:

My Research Applications & Agreements (MRA) Association Grievance

We wrote to you previously about a grievance UTFA filed about violations of equal academic freedom rights and discrimination protections, and restrictions on our right to conduct self-directed research. [The issue in brief: the Administration imposed improper criteria on Teaching Stream faculty and librarians in the **MRA (My Research Applications & Agreements) system** and in related processes and documents, and subjected research funding applications from Teaching Stream faculty and librarians to additional and inappropriate scrutiny.]

At this time last year, we wrote to say we were "cautiously optimistic" that we would be able to resolve the grievance. While the Administration took several months longer than they had promised in order to fully implement the agreement they signed not long after we last wrote to you, **we are delighted to report that the inequities have now been removed, and grant applications and research agreements submitted via the MRA portal by Teaching Stream faculty are now required to be subject to the same approval factors as those of Tenure Stream faculty, with no additional conditions.** If you experience something different – for example, if you are required to submit additional information about the ways in which your proposed research fits into your upcoming teaching plans, or if you learn that different approval criteria are being applied to your grant applications than is applied to those of your Tenure Stream colleagues – please contact UTFA (**advice@utfa.org**) right away.

Faculty relocation office

UTFA successfully advocated to the Administration for the **Faculty Relocation Office** to **extend its services to Teaching Stream faculty and librarians** (because, before UTFA intervened, this office served only Tenure Stream faculty). Even though this doesn't directly help those of us already here at the University, it is an important win for UTFA members signing their first contract.

Workload

UTFA became aware that the Administration was not following the requirements of the **Workload Policy and Procedures For Faculty and Librarians (WLPP)** – among others, the requirement to provide "written reasons" for the rejection of unit workload policies – and several units that had proposed teaching load reductions for Teaching Stream faculty were improperly denied those changes. Some members grieved (with significant support from UTFA's Legal & Advice Team), and some members were unwilling to grieve (and UTFA did what it could behind the scenes, albeit in a necessarily more limited way). In the end, we were able to achieve some very good results, including reconsideration of previously rejected policies.

These grievances were also helpful in other ways: they (and other workload-related grievances this year) resulted in the Administration working with UTFA on an agreed-to format for administrative reviews of the Unit Workload Policies, and they allow UTFA's Negotiating Team to underscore to the arbitrator that there is "demonstrated need" for changes to the WLPP.

In these and other ways, UTFA members can work with advisors in UTFA's Legal & Advice portfolio to continue to advocate for the rights of Teaching Stream faculty, as well as the membership more broadly. There is more work to be done, but we're up to the task.

Finally, a quick reminder of two upcoming dates to hold in your calendars:

- **UTFA's Annual General Meeting (AGM)** - Thursday, April 10, 2025, 3-5 pm.
- **Teaching Stream Committee Meeting** (where we will be discussing workload issues): Wednesday, April 16, 2025, 4-5 p.m. ALL Teaching Stream faculty (not just Committee members) are welcome to attend and participate.

Hope to see you there!

Sincerely,

Sherri Helwig, Vice-President, Grievances
Susan J. Wagner, Chair, Teaching Stream Committee

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