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April 15, 2015

SJAC and the Grievance Portfolio

The UTFA Grievance portfolio has, for many years, urged appointments policy change for the tenure stream, for the part-time and full-time teaching stream, and for academic librarians. UTFA's legal counsel and I have repeatedly witnessed the damaging effects of weak policy on the tenure review process and the appointment, renewal, and promotion processes in the teaching stream. This is to say nothing of the outdated policy that governs our librarians, who maintain one of the best research library systems in the world. The Grievance portfolio has repeatedly stated that the best means of improving working conditions for our members is through policy change – and not grievances.

I am therefore grateful for the considerable achievement of the SJAC process. This landmark negotiation has won much-needed changes to policy, while creating a path for future negotiations that will mean fewer and less protracted grievances. Regrettably, UTFA was unable to achieve policy change for part-time faculty, who are particularly vulnerable. I hope that UTFA will commit to pursuing improvements for them as well. I wish to thank all the members of the SJAC Teaching Stream Subcommittee: Claude Evans, Connie Guberman, Brock MacDonald, Jun Nogami, Scott Prudham, and Terezia Zoric. Legal counsel Alison Warrian (UTFA's General Counsel) and Steven Barrett (Sack, Goldblatt, Mitchell) were instrumental in securing our hard-won results. Finally, there would have been no agreement without the considerable skill of SJAC's facilitator, the Honourable Frank Iacobucci.

Tenure Issues

The Grievance portfolio is currently handling thirteen tenure files, including files in which the tenure committee has issued a tentative negative recommendation. Each year, we urge tenure and teaching stream candidates to contact UTFA if they see any negative language in the summary of evidence. We anticipate that, in the coming years, newly negotiated policy language on the summary of evidence will reshape the purpose, voice, and rhetoric of that important document. The new summaries will bring greater clarity for junior faculty, who will look to the summary not simply as a hurdle to clear but as a

rare opportunity to receive meaningful feedback.

Tenure Workshop

The Grievance portfolio will sponsor a tenure workshop on April 30, from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m., in Room 105, Health Sciences Building, 155 College Street. This workshop will cover both the interim review (in year four) and the tenure review (in year six). Through the SJAC process, UTFA and Governing Council have agreed to changes to the tenure review policy that will be implemented in the coming year. This workshop will explain those changes. We will answer questions tenure stream faculty might have about the new six-year tenure clock. All are welcome. Please register with the office at faculty@utfa.org.

Statistics

Currently UTFA is handling approximately 84 files (both grievances and tenure files). At the time of writing, UTFA knows of one tenure denial issued in the 2014-2015 academic year, although that file was part of the 2013-2014 cohort. We know of no tenure denials for the 2014-2015 cohort although some negative recommendations have been made. Tenure committees should be making their recommendations for or against the granting of tenure by April 15, 2015.

In the 2013-2014 academic year, 88 candidates were considered for tenure. Of these, 84 were granted tenure and 4 were denied tenure. At the time of writing, the Administration had yet to supply UTFA with the most recent statistics for teaching stream promotion files.

Grievance Committee

The Grievance Committee has discussed in detail the gains UTFA's certified unit at St. Michael's College achieved in recent negotiations; the anticipated positive effects on grievances of the SJAC policy changes; the revised draft Provostial Guidelines on assessing teaching; and member concerns related to the TA strike (CUPE 3902 Unit 1).

Future projects include collaboration with the Appointments, Equity, and Teaching Stream Committees on issues related to precarious academic labour, and consultation with the new retiree committee on articulating and refining the appeal process for benefits claims.

I would like to thank the Grievance Committee: Mounir AbouHaidar, Kathy Bickmore, Michael Bramah, Claude Evans, Connie Guberman, Shashi Kant, Linda Kohn, Brock MacDonald, and Scott Prudham.

Thanks to UTFA Staff and Legal Counsel

Many thanks to UTFA's outstanding team: lawyers Reni Chang, Heather Diggle, and Alison Warrian (General Counsel); Grievance Assistant Rucsandra Schmelzer, Administrative Assistant Chris Penn, Business Officer Marta Horban, Communications Officer Aylwin Lo, and Special Assistant to the Executive Committee David Mackenzie. They have worked harder than ever in this past year. We are indebted to the lawyers and staff of Sack, Goldblatt, Mitchell, who serve our members so ably. Finally, I would like to thank Scott Prudham for his leadership in a challenging period of UTFA's history.

Cynthia Messenger

Vice-President, Grievances

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