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Report of the Chair of the Membership Committee, 2014–2015

April 15, 2015

The Membership Committee is one of the newest committees at UTFA, under a decade old, but its mission is central to the organization – coordinating communication with and outreach to members. Our goal is to be accessible, understand the multiple goals and concerns faculty and librarians have, and raise the level of dialogue and awareness among our members, enhancing university citizenship.

The Membership Committee met once each term this year, and both meetings were well attended, kick-starting key initiatives. In September we attended the new faculty orientation, shaking hands with dozens of new hires, and ensuring that new members see us as a resource. We discussed our services with them, and the current initiatives we are undertaking and negotiations in which we are engaged.

A central goal of the Membership Committee is to give faculty and librarians cause to think they can play a meaningful role in determining the policies and practices of their University – even when their daily experiences can make them feel otherwise. Our aim is to empower our members to raise questions, make proposals, generate discussions, and better understand our rights and obligations.

We are also aiming to raise member stewardship through highlighting intellectual work on the university. At our 2014 AGM, Professors Sheila Slaughter (UGA) and Neil Guppy (UBC) came to speak about federal granting practices and the sciences. Continuing in this vein in the fall of 2014, we hosted Professor Chris Newfield (UCSB), author of *Unmaking the Public University: The Forty Year Assault on the Middle Class* (Harvard UP), who spoke on university governance. Newfield's talk, "What Was Faculty Governance? How Can It Be Rebuilt? Ideas from the US and UK," raises questions about faculty quiescence in the face of adverse changes to the university. Video recordings of these talks can be found on our website.

Finally, Professor Martha Nussbaum of the University of Chicago was to deliver our annual C.B. Macpherson Lecture this March, but had to be rescheduled due to CUPE 3902's strike. She is now scheduled to come in early 2016. Her talk is titled "Anger and Revolutionary Justice." As these talks attest, UTFA is working to bring our community together, across research and disciplinary silos, to think about the university and social change in consequential ways.

Apart from these broader engagements, we are also on the ground in departments every month. The Membership Committee helps Council members communicate needed information to their constituents, and Council members bring news of their departments to our monthly Council meetings. In the fall, after we completed revising the Memorandum of Agreement between UTFA and the Governing Council, we visited dozens of departments to discuss the revisions. Visiting departments is central to what we do. Our president and other Executive members will be happy to visit any faculty or librarian meeting to answer questions and hear concerns throughout the academic year.

Membership Committee members this year supported initiatives undertaken by faculty and students together, including two specific issues members brought to us: the fossil fuel divestment campaign, and an initiative to educate the community on sexual assault on university campuses. These highlight the ways faculty and students can build the kind of university we want to work and learn in, that cares about local safety and global sustainability.

Finally, be on the lookout for a set of communications from us starting this spring, thanks to our new staff member Aylwin Lo, whose graphics are amazing. Our first postcard introduces you to your salary, benefits, pensions, and workload bargaining team and the facts and figures that animate their agenda. And the second comprises essential facts and figures about you, UTFA's members. How many of us are at UTM? How many teaching and tenure stream faculty do we have, how many librarians? One central way to build a stronger community is to understand something of who we are and where we are located across the University. A third postcard will highlight the intellectual and professional work of librarians. Faculty might not be aware how many librarians are also scholars in their own right. There is more that unites us than is sometimes apparent.

I thank the participants in the Membership Committee for your creativity and enthusiasm: Mounir AbouHaidar, Lauren Bialystok, Paul Downes, Kristie Dukewich, Paul Hamel, Jennifer Jenkins, Ken MacDonald, Naomi Morgenstern, Andreas Motsch, Andrea Muehlebach, Rosa Sarabia, Vicki Skelton, Harriet Sonne de Torrens, Lino Grima, and Terezia Zoric. I encourage all members to be in touch if they have ideas about how we can be reaching members more effectively.

Judith Taylor
Chair, Membership Committee

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