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## Report of the Chair of the Equity Committee, 2015-2016

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This was another busy year for the Equity Committee. The two issues at the top of our agenda were precarious academic labour and gender-based and sexual violence prevention.

### Precarious Academic Labour

In September, with the support of UTFA's General Counsel, OCUFA, and UTFA Vice-Presidents Cynthia Messenger and Linda Kohn, I presented UTFA's submission to the Ontario government's [Changing Workplaces Review](#) consultation. The hearings focused on amending the [Labour Relations Act, 1995](#) and [Employment Standards Act, 2000](#) given emerging trends such as the growth in contingent and part-time work. UTFA's submission contained a two-fold emphasis. First, we argued that precarious employment is a threat to academic freedom and the quality of education in Ontario universities:

The full exercise of academic freedom depends on the job security provided by tenure, continuing or permanent status... [A]s a province, we all stand to lose out on the contributions and the advancement of knowledge that individuals who fear for their jobs could be making.

Second, we urged panelists to consider the intersection between precarious employment and human rights, and to "consider the values of equity, inclusion and accessibility" as they deliberated. In particular we highlighted some of the disadvantages associated with part-time academic appointments at the University of Toronto, and recommended remedial action:

Tenure, continuing and permanent stream appointments at the University of Toronto are made only at 100% FTE. In other words, individuals who are able to work only part-time, due to, for example, disability or family status under the Human Rights Code, are ineligible even to apply for the secure tenured/continuing/permanent positions that provide true academic freedom, along with the other benefits of regularized employment.

**RECOMMENDATION:** We call upon the province to make the amendments necessary to ensure that

individuals who teach on contract or teach part-time are compensated fairly in relation to more secure and/or full-time colleagues, that contract and part-time faculty do not face less favourable treatment compared to their full-time colleagues, and that systemic efforts be directed toward better recognizing and rewarding teaching in our provincial higher education system.

In February, Claude Evans, Cynthia Messenger, Michael Attridge, and I attended OCUFA's Confronting Precarious Academic Work conference. Building on what we learned about the current state of insecure academic work, UTFA will host an event on academic precarity at U of T in the fall of 2016.

I look forward to collaborating further with Michael Attridge and Cynthia Messenger to improve insecure part-time academic appointments. Next steps involve surveying part-time faculty and librarians and conducting focus groups to investigate members' concerns. This will strengthen UTFA's ability to advocate for members who work without the protection of permanent status, and to revise and improve policy.

## **Gender-based and Sexual Violence Prevention**

Despite an inclusive mandate, the Advisory Committee to the President and Provost on Preventing and Responding to Sexual Violence did not widely engage our members' voices, contributions, and expertise. It thereby missed an opportunity to understand how gender-based and sexual violence at the University affects faculty and librarians. UTFA sees these as both student issues *and* workplace safety issues.

In response, members of the Equity Committee engaged in a series of productive conversations with members of the UTFA Executive and Council, senior administrators, and faculty members with expertise in gender equity, sexual assault, post-trauma, and resilience. Despite our concerns, the Committee is supportive of various recommendations indicated by the Advisory Committee's recent final report, including the call for campus-wide climate surveys and prevention-focused and evidence-informed University-wide education programs.

The Equity Committee also advocates for work not yet done to be undertaken. This includes strengthening the research base for the Advisory Committee's recommendations, especially around the unique circumstances and contexts of the University of Toronto's three campuses. The Committee also recommends that member expertise be tapped to conduct climate surveys and to design and deliver educational programs for students, members, and staff.

## **Grievance Training**

I have been apprenticing in the Grievance portfolio under the guidance of Vice-President, Grievances, Cynthia Messenger. I also attended training sessions offered by UTFA in-house counsel, Goldblatt Partners counsel, and OCUFA on issues including accommodation, human rights complaints, mental health, etc. This education has underlined the close connection between UTFA's work in grievances and its strong commitment to equity for its members. I am very grateful for all the support I have received as a trainee.

Finally, I want to thank those who served as members of the Committee, as well as some who supported the work of the Committee: Michael Attridge, Kathy Bickmore, Connie Guberman, Rena Helms-Park, Scott Prudham, Katharine Rankin, Lana Stermac, and Harriet Sonne de Torrens; my fellow Executive Committee colleagues; and all of the UTFA staff.

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Chair, Equity Committee

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