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Report of the Vice-President, Grievances, 2020-2021

July 10, 2021

Advice and Grievance Statistics for July 1, 2020 to April 14, 2021

Individual inquiries
Number of Inquiries: 331 (July 2020 to April 14, 2021)
Active files: 227

At the beginning of the pandemic, member concerns were centred in four main areas: 1) health and safety; 2) the shift to online teaching and corresponding excessive workloads; 3) job security (primarily from our part-time and Contractually Limited Term Appointment colleagues, but also some inquiries from members who were pre-tenure, pre-continuing status, or pre-permanent status); and 4) COVID-19-related accommodations, such as child care, eldercare, and personal health. We also received a large number of inquiries related to laboratory closures, tenure/continuing status reviews, requests for delays to academic reviews, and disrupted research leaves.

Impact of COVID-19 on our members
When I began my term as Vice-President, Grievances last July, most of the concerns we received from our members centered on the Administration's proposed re-opening plans for the fall. Specifically, faculty and librarians expressed the following key concerns with the proposed plan:

- The failure to reflect public health recommendations (many of which came from our faculty members who worked at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health);
- The imposition of a "hybrid" teaching model across many academic units;
- The requirement that online teaching should include synchronous and asynchronous options; and
- The excessive workload from the requirement to prepare for both in-person and online teaching.

As mentioned in UTFA President Terezia Zorić's report, our members were especially concerned that the proposed plan did not reflect public health recommendations given the uncertainty about pandemic-related health and safety issues. UTFA members who had health conditions or child care or eldercare responsibilities expressed deep reservations about the Administration's plans to require in-person

teaching when experts predicted higher health risks because of an anticipated second COVID-19 wave. Also as mentioned in the President's report, a record number of our members came to us with workload complaints. Others flagged significant equity concerns around the Administration's plans.

Association Grievances
There are currently 9 active Association Grievances being pursued by UTFA:

- COVID-19 and Workload
- COVID-19 and Health and Safety
- Salary Discrimination
- Pay Equity for Faculty
- Pay Equity for Librarians
- Divisional Guidelines for the Assessment of Teaching Effectiveness
- Student Course Evaluations/Student Evaluations of Teaching (SCEs/SETs)
- Faculty of Law IHRP Hiring Controversy

Advice and Grievance Portfolio: Scope and Resources
As has been reported in previous AGM Newsletters, the Special Joint Advisory Committee (SJAC) process expanded the scope of policy negotiation areas available for UTFA to pursue. This in turn expanded UTFA's responsibilities in relation to its membership and increased the demands that are now being placed on UTFA's resources.

Accordingly, this year UTFA has been assessing its resources in relation to the advice and representation it provides to members. Our aim is to continue to provide exceptional service to our members in a cost-effective manner.

New Part-Time Policy
As was reported in the 2020 AGM Newsletter, UTFA concluded the multi-year negotiation of a new part-time policy in May 2020. This year, we have been focused on the policy's implementation, including assisting long-serving part-time faculty members transition into the new Continuing Appointment category.

UTFA is watching the rollout of this policy closely. We encourage part-time members to contact us with their questions or concerns by sending an email to advice@utfa.org.

Thanks
I want to thank Executive Director Kathy Johnson, and General Counsel, Helen Nowak, for their leadership in overseeing the structural changes made to the grievance handling process at UTFA. For their unyielding support and unflagging energy, a huge thank you goes to our outstanding legal team: Helen Nowak, Reni Chang, Heather Diggle, and Samantha Olexson. I would also like to thank our legal assistant, Crystal Doyle, who has been of great support to the team. The grievance portfolio has borne the challenges of COVID-19 as much as any of us; they have responded to our members professionally and collegially.

I would also like to thank my experienced colleagues on the Executive Committee and the Grievance Committee for their contributions to the work of UTFA.

Finally, I would like to extend my deep appreciation for the guidance of Terezia Zorić. Terezia has shown remarkable knowledge and expertise in grievance handling and has been an unwavering source of

information since the beginning of my term as Vice-President, Grievances.

Brian McDonagh
Vice-President, Grievances

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