



Information Report

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO *faculty* ASSOCIATION

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SJAC Information Report #4

The “Collegiality Gap”

**“There are many here among us
Who feel that life is but a joke
But you and I, we’ve been through that
And this is not our fate
So let us not talk falsely now
The hour is getting late”**

— Bob Dylan, All Along the Watchtower

Introduction

Concerns over academic planning processes have become prominent across the University in recent years. When faced with instances in which consequential deliberation has been lacking, we encounter the absence of a policy that defines the features of a truly collegial process of academic restructuring.

To remedy this problem, via the ongoing Special Joint Advisory Committee (SJAC) process involving UTFA and the Governing Council, UTFA has proposed a [new policy](#) on academic planning procedures as they apply to faculty and librarians. This proposed policy would be subject to mutual agreement by the Governing Council and UTFA. In addition, we have [proposed to amend](#) the current Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) prescribing UTFA’s role in representing you to allow for more comprehensive and productive negotiation of this and other academic policies that shape the context of our teaching, research, and professional work. The current MoA was originally signed in 1977 and is showing its age, including by its omission of the procedural aspects of academic planning.

In marked contrast, the Provost’s Office insists that the appropriate remedy is an imposed guideline on academic planning, one that would be mutually agreed by no one, and accountable to no one in its formulation.

This difference in approach between UTFA and the Provost's Office is of fundamental importance to all of us as academics. In this bulletin, we delve more deeply into the differences between negotiated policies and imposed guidelines, and, by means of questions and answers, address why these differences matter to you and to the University.

Q: What does “collegiality gap” mean?

A: Most faculty associations in Canada are certified unions and negotiate, together with their respective administrations, across a full range of academic and compensation issues that comprise terms of academic employment. Moreover, in North American universities, it is common that senates, whose membership is composed of a clear majority of elected academic staff, deliberate over academic policies in some formally democratic manner. Many universities have *both* a collective agreement for academic staff *and* a senate. Not here.

The University of Toronto is actually unique in Canada in featuring *neither* a comprehensive collective agreement outlining negotiated (i.e., not imposed) terms and conditions of employment for faculty and librarians (e.g., academic policies such as those governing access to academic records and academic freedom provisions) *nor* a true academic senate. Thus the “**collegiality gap**”. The ongoing SJAC process was created in part to help close that gap through negotiated reform of the relationship between UTFA and the Governing Council.

Q: Why is *real* (i.e., institutionalized) collegiality important in university governance?

A: The University of Toronto is defined in important respects by an institutional mission that integrates excellence in research and teaching, linking program and course offerings to the scholarly expertise and activities of faculty.

To fulfill this mission effectively, academic staff (i.e., faculty and librarians) must be afforded a place of primacy in the determination of the *context* as well as the content of their work. That is, academic staff should be centrally involved in determining how the institution meets its mission. For that to happen, we need to select not only the readings and lecture topics in our courses, for example, but also, working together, we must contribute consequentially to the configuration of academic programs, units, and priorities, and to the academic policies that govern our work as scholars, teachers, intellectuals, and professionals.

Q: What does the collegiality gap have to do with the academic planning issue specifically?

A: There is no policy language applying to the University as a whole that describes what makes academic planning processes collegial, and specifically, what rights and responsibilities faculty and librarians enjoy in academic planning.

Q: In general, what is the difference between a guideline and a policy?

A: At the University of Toronto, many important issues are shaped by guidelines. Guidelines are documents issued by the Administration on any number of issues. Of primary interest here are Provostial and divisional (i.e., decanal) guidelines, issued, respectively, by the Office of the Provost, or Offices of Division Heads (e.g., Deans or the Principals of UTM and UTSC).

The provenance of guidelines stands in contrast to that of true policies. Guidelines are simply imposed. Policies usually have one of two key features and sometimes both:

- (i) Policies go through governance approval (e.g., Academic Board and Governing Council); and
- (ii) Where subject to UTFA's jurisdiction as prescribed by the MoA, they are negotiated with UTFA.

Examples of important guidelines that shape the context of our work and yet have never been negotiated include (much to the surprise of many) the Provostial Guidelines on PTR. These apply to everyone and are clearly the sort of thing that ought to have been negotiated. Yet they were not.

Another example is PDAD&C memo #134 from 2003 ("The Tenure Review Process"). This document is widely used in the administration of tenure cases. Yet it was never negotiated, nor did it go through governance. It was simply imposed by the Provost. This document has become, over time, de facto policy and is now foundational to the tenure process. Much of the language in it is good; but the process by which it was imposed is an affront to the very idea of collegial governance.

Academic freedom depends on real input from academic staff when it comes to academic planning. But that input also underpins the very excellence for which the University of Toronto stands. That is, academic excellence depends on academic staff shaping the academic programs, units, and priorities germane to their expertise.

In many ways, on a day-to-day basis, we take these general principles as given. And yet, when significant changes to academic units are being considered at U of T, what role do we play? Who listens to our voices? What provisions secure our access to information that is relevant to proposals for change? How do we participate in the formulation of such proposals for change?

These questions have resonated in the wake of failed academic planning exercises in recent years, including, most glaringly, the attempt by the Office of the Provost to unilaterally close the Faculty of Forestry, and the botched academic planning exercise in the Faculty of Arts and Science in 2010.

UTFA has proposed to negotiate a policy with the Governing Council concerning the role of faculty and librarians in academic planning. Of course, there are other stakeholders (e.g., students) in academic planning processes. UTFA does not purport to negotiate on their

behalf nor to limit their involvement in any way. However, to date the Provost's stated approach has been the unilateral imposition of procedural language into administrative manuals. That is, the Provost intends to simply impose language that would govern academic planning processes, language neither agreed to by UTFA nor subject to approval by the Governing Council. That, on its face, is not a collegial approach.

We have consistently opposed the approach of the Provost's Office to establishing academic planning processes. We continue to oppose it now. You have indicated, most recently in our [questionnaire of February 2013](#), that you prefer a negotiated policy rather than something simply imposed by the Provost's Office. Until you change your mind, our position will remain the same.

Q: If an imposed guideline on academic planning processes is ill-advised, when is a guideline appropriate?

A: Guidelines may be appropriate when issued by academic divisions over matters that apply uniquely to those divisions. An example is the [Faculty of Pharmacy's Graduate Appointment Guidelines \(for faculty\)](#). While there are some issues common across the University concerning graduate appointments for faculty, conditions clearly vary in different intellectual milieux.

Q: In general, how do guidelines apply to or affect policies?

A: Another important purpose of guidelines is to interpret and apply more general policy language in ways that are unique to specific divisions. This is appropriate, as long as it is clear that, in the event of a conflict, the general policy applies. If a guideline is not consistent with a policy negotiated with UTFA and if the policy in question is not seen to take precedence, then that guideline has the effect of undermining collegial and accountable governance.

Q: Can guidelines take on the status of policy?

A: Yes! The Provostial PTR guidelines are a good example. These were never negotiated with UTFA (or anyone). But they now have the same status as a policy. This is also true of Provostial memo #134 on the tenure process (though UTFA would take the position that the PPAA trumps that memo). UTFA can indeed grieve violations of guidelines in the same manner as we may grieve violations of policy. But the crucial difference is that, in grieving a guideline, we are grieving language we never agreed to in the first place. And it is language that could be rescinded or changed at the stroke of a pen. The effect is what we might call "*guideline creep*" and it is evidence, in some instances, of administrative excess.

Q: What does this all have to do with the SJAC?

A: The Special Joint Advisory Committee process was created with a core mandate of examining the role of faculty and librarians in academic planning, and of reviewing the strengths and weaknesses of the MoA. The parties specifically agreed to explore

ways of modernizing the role of UTFA in representing you. A key reason was to address the lack of policy language on the procedural aspects of academic planning, but also to revisit processes by which important academic policies are determined. Those policies include such matters as academic appointments, academic freedom provisions, and language governing control over access to academic records and correspondence. UTFA is the only democratically accountable, independent, and collective advocate for faculty and librarians at the U of T.¹ Therefore, the role of UTFA in holding administrative authority (including that of the Provost's Office) more accountable is important in the context of the broader collegiality gap.

Q: What can you do?

A: Talk to your colleagues. Set up a brown bag lunch to discuss these issues and invite someone from UTFA to attend. Write to the Administration and demand change. Write to UTFA. We are all busy. But with your involvement and support, we can make change. The default is status quo. The SJAC process will only work if the Administration becomes convinced that you want change. You have said you do, consistently. Yet securing that change takes time. The choice of approach on how to address the collegiality gap in academic planning is part of a broader problem. Only you, as faculty and librarians, can determine the remedy. The question is whether we will insist on *real* collegial governance, or allow managerial excess to choke the excellence out of this University.

All feedback regarding the SJAC initiative is welcome. Write to bargaining@utfa.org. and/or consider posting a comment on our revamped web page.

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¹ Of course, this is not to diminish the important role CUPE plays in representing sessional instructors who are also academic staff.