Taking Stock in Challenging Times: UTFA's Organizational and Governance Review
Executive Summary

The academic sector is rapidly changing, with multiple challenges facing university faculty and librarians. To best respond to the challenges facing our members, UTFA retained the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) in 2025 to conduct an Organizational and Governance Review. (The full document follows below.) UTFA commissioned the review in order to seek recommendations on how to democratize UTFA's internal governance structure, to make our Association more responsive, effective, and efficient, and to better align our structure with other Faculty Associations in the sector. We selected CAUT for its expertise and ability to compare UTFA's structure with those of other Faculty Associations across Canada.

UTFA recently received CAUT's comprehensive Report, prepared over a one-year period. Member engagement exceeded expectations, with over 1400 faculty and librarians participating through interviews, surveys, and submissions.

Nearly 70% of respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with UTFA. While this highlights the high regard in which members hold UTFA, the report identifies room for improvement to more effectively support our members and their interests.

The Report provides an overview of UTFA's history, current structure, and the challenges that lie ahead. CAUT identified the following themes from its review:

- UTFA's Mission and Purpose
- UTFA Council
- UTFA Elections
- Executive Members' Role Clarity, Responsibility, and Accountability
- Workload
- Improving UTFA's Effectiveness

The Executive, therefore, is developing a strategic plan for each of the following general areas:

1. Focusing UTFA's Mission Statement;
2. Reforming the role of UTFA Council to focus on bringing the voice of our membership to the Executive
3. Expanding the number of directly-elected Executive positions to provide more opportunities for member engagement, and defining more clearly the role of Executive Members;
4. Expanding the voice of the membership at general membership meetings;
5. Revamping the structure of existing Committees;
6. Continuing to prioritize bargaining for members, including by reviewing structures and processes that can improve outcomes;
7. Streamlining processes for internal governance to decrease the load on staff time.

The Report is thorough, and there are many additional recommendations. While the Report is critical of inefficiencies and discordancies, it also offers an optimistic roadmap for robust discussions and further engagement opportunities for our members.

The Report is available to all members below.

This Report marks the start–not the end– of UTFA's self-review. As we move into the implementation phase in the new year, your advice and involvement will be essential in shaping whether and how we move forward with the Report's recommendations.

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On behalf of the UTFA Executive

2026

University of Toronto Faculty Association Governance Review

Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT)

David Robinson, Executive Director

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This report presents the outcomes of an external governance and operational review of the University of Toronto Faculty Association (UTFA). The purpose of the review was to examine how UTFA's governance structures and practices could be better aligned with the association's purpose as a labour-focused organization. UTFA leadership was interested in exploring how the association's governance structures and operations might ensure greater effectiveness, membership engagement, role clarity, democracy, accountability and responsiveness. The goal was to determine whether UTFA's structure could be more democratic in nature, more efficient and effective in meeting members' demands and priorities, and more aligned with certified faculty associations. Additionally, the review considered ways UTFA could provide greater role clarity and accountability of executive members and staff.

The review encompassed three main components. The first involved a comparison of UTFA's governance structure with that of other academic staff associations in Canada. The comparator group was composed primarily of associations based at the U-15 medical-doctoral universities. Additionally, UTFA requested that the associations at Toronto Metropolitan University and Carleton University be included. The list of all the associations included in the review and their membership numbers by academic rank, as reported to the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Membership Count by Academic Staff Association

Association	Professor	Associate	Assistant	CAS*	Other	Total
DFA (Dalhousie)	334	273	216	127	252	1,202
SPUL (Laval)	798	283	237	--	22	1,340
SGPPUM (Montreal)	593	413	293	--	3	1,302
MAUT (McGill)	297	348	152	--	167	964
QUFA (Queen's)	351	276	190	563	16	1,396

APUO (Ottawa)	548	424	223	--	78	1,273
MUFA (McMaster)	396	315	289	7	11	1,018
FAUW (Waterloo)	461	572	286	1	2	1,322
UWOFA (Western)	465	388	378	315	137	1,683
UMFA (Manitoba)	406	268	290	--	327	1,291
USFA (Saskatchewan)	387	255	203	--	137	982
AASUA (Alberta)	1,045	529	309	1,488	713	4,084
TUCFA (Calgary)	745	641	418	739	--	2,543
UBCFA (UBC)	1,221	728	577	866	444	3,836
CUASA (Carleton)	285	475	180	--	46	986
TFA (Toronto Met)	303	402	232	--	50	987
UTFA (Toronto)	967	703	565	--	310	3,331

*Contract Academic Staff

The second part of the review involved interviews with 42 key UTFA leaders and stakeholders conducted between October 21 and November 7, 2025. Interviewees included current and past members of the UTFA Executive, Council, committees, and staff. Each interviewee was asked open-ended questions about their experiences with UTFA, how effective they believe its governance structure is, and what suggestions they had for how existing structures and practices might be improved. Largely, the answers provided by the interviewees aligned with the survey results.

Finally, a survey of the UTFA membership was distributed and conducted between February 3 and February 26, 2026. Invitations to participate in the survey were sent to active and retired UTFA members. In total, the survey population consisted of 4,077 individuals and achieved a response rate of 28.6%. Participation in the survey was voluntary and confidential. Only the survey researchers have access to the full set of responses. Open-ended responses were analyzed and coded thematically.

Responses to the interviews and the survey were grouped into themes and are referenced throughout this report, with a summary of the survey results provided in Appendix 2.

Overall, the review found that UTFA has strong support from its members. Nearly 70% of survey respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the association. Members also expressed a common understanding about what they considered UTFA's mission and priorities to be; approximately 96% identified negotiating salaries, benefits, and working conditions as its primary objective. Some differences of opinion emerged over the scope of UTFA's mandate, particularly around the issue of whether the association should engage on broader political and social issues beyond the workplace. It is worth noting, however, that "political and social issues" were not defined in the survey or in the interviews, and therefore these issues may be understood differently across the membership. In the interviews, participants primarily focused their comments on UTFA's internal governance structures and processes. While most expressed satisfaction with the association, the role, mandate, and functioning of Council and Executive generated considerable discussion and numerous proposals for improvement, reflecting a broad recognition of the need for reform. Most interviewees also commented on UTFA elections, workload, communications and membership engagement, and whether certification as a trade union would be a desirable way to strengthen the association.

This report summarizes the key themes emerging from the three components of the review and suggests several recommendations for consideration. These recommendations are not prescriptive. Rather, they intend to provoke further discussion amongst leadership and the membership so that they may determine what changes would be best aligned with UTFA's mission and priorities.

Organizational Background

The University of Toronto Faculty Association can trace its origins to the Committee to Represent the Teaching Staff (CRTS) first established between 1938 and 1942. The CRTS was an informally structured body that sought to represent the interests of faculty on a range of matters arising within the University. Following the formation of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) in 1951 as a federation of local faculty associations, the CRTS developed a more formal structure to be able to fully participate in CAUT. The Association of Teaching Staff (ATS) was subsequently created in 1954 and renamed in 1972 as the University of Toronto Faculty Association.[1]

Since its early origins as the ATS, the association's basic governance structure has remained relatively unchanged. From the beginning, it was governed by a Council – initially and confusingly referred to as the "Executive Committee", until 1963 – whose members were elected by academic units within the university. The Council today is composed of up to 56 active members representing various faculties and schools of the university and includes 4 additional seats for retired members. Under the Constitution and By-laws, UTFA's Council is granted the power to:

- Establish and carry out UTFA's policies and objectives
- Ratify agreements made between UTFA and the University of Toronto administration
- Appoint members of the Executive (excluding the President who is directly elected by the membership), committees, and negotiating teams
- Recommend by-law changes for adoption by the membership
- Approve the annual budget of the association

[1] Willam H. Nelson, *The Search for Faculty Power: The history of the University of Toronto Faculty Association, 1942-1992* (Toronto: University of Toronto Faculty Association and Canadian Scholars' Press Inc., 1993), pp. 7-15.

Council also elects or appoints most members of the Executive Committee. The Executive in turn manages the affairs of the association between meetings of Council. In the early years of the association, there were just four positions on the UTFA Executive: Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. Today, there are 15 executive positions:

- President
- Past-President
- Vice-President (Salaries, Benefits, Pensions, and Workload)
- Vice-President (Grievances)
- Vice-President (University and External Affairs)
- Treasurer
- Chair, Appointments Committee
- Chair, Equity Committee
- Chair, Librarians' Committee
- Chair, Membership Committee
- Chair, Retired Members Committee
- Chair, Teaching Stream Committee
- Members-at-large (3 positions)

Based on membership numbers as reported to CAUT, UTFA is the third largest academic staff association in Canada, following the Association of Academic Staff of the University of Alberta (AASUA) and the University of British Columbia Faculty Association (UBCFA). However, unlike AASUA and UBCFA, UTFA does not include per-course contract academic staff in its membership.

Unlike most faculty associations in Canada, UTFA is not a certified trade union recognized under provincial labour legislation.[2] The other major exceptions are the McGill Association of University Teachers (MAUT)[3], the Faculty Association of the University of Waterloo (FAUW), and the McMaster

[2] In 2002, UTFA Council approved and launched a certification drive after the University Provost provided notice to terminate the Memorandum of Agreement with UTFA on terms and conditions of employment. The certification drive was suspended in February, 2003 when the Provost rescinded the notice of termination.

[3] At the time of writing, several new academic staff bargaining units have been certified or are in the process of certifying at McGill. This has occurred at the departmental or unit level, including Law, Education, Arts, Science, Continuing Education, and the McGill Libraries.

University Faculty Association (MUFA). Of these non-certified associations, only MAUT has not negotiated mandatory dues collection modelled on the "Rand formula" or automatic dues check-off that is common amongst certified unions and mandated upon request of the union in most provincial labour legislation.

Because it is not a certified trade union, UTFA does not have the right to strike. It also does not bargain a "collective agreement" under the *Ontario Labour Relations Act*. It has instead reached a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with the University that was first negotiated in the mid-1970s. While the MoA contains many of the basic elements found in the collective agreements of certified academic staff associations, it is not as comprehensive. It includes a formal and binding grievance and arbitration process and provisions on academic freedom, workload, non-discrimination, research and study leaves, and the rights of academic librarians. Additionally, the agreement spells out a process for the negotiation of salaries that includes a binding third-party arbitration process to resolve disputes and impasse.

Beginning in 2012, UTFA reached a mediated agreement with the administration to develop a Special Joint Advisory Committee (SJAC) with the goal of expanding the scope of what could be negotiated. The MoA had excluded several important policies and processes that directly affected the terms and conditions of employment of members, including appointment and promotion procedures and academic restructuring. Initial talks nearly failed, but an agreement was eventually reached in 2014 that included, amongst other things, a new process to negotiate policies identified in the MoA. The outcome significantly expanded the scope of what UTFA can bargain, but the nature of how the process works also increased demands on the association's leaders and staff. Negotiations under the SJAC framework can be frequent, complex and lengthy.

In summary, UTFA has evolved from a predominantly informal professional association to one that has taken on a more expanded role and a greater trade union orientation while remaining uncertified. It has made impressive gains for its members within the restraints it operates, while navigating an increasingly complex and demanding environment. UTFA's success has both raised expectations from members and has greatly expanded the work and the responsibilities of the association's leadership and staff. At the same time, its basic governance architecture has remained largely unchanged, raising the question of whether UTFA's structure is still fit for purpose.

Theme 1: Mission and Purpose

Effective organizations are ones that exhibit strong internal cohesion anchored by a clear and commonly understood mission. A strong mission statement concisely and clearly articulates why an organization exists, who it serves and what value it creates. This helps an organization maintain focus, set priorities, manage expectations and prevent mission drift.

Versions of UTFA's mission statement appear in the constitution, on the website, and in the annual report to members (see Appendix 1). UTFA's purpose, as set out in Article 2.1 of its constitution is: "…to promote the welfare of the current and retired faculty, librarians, and research associates of the University of Toronto, the University of St Michael's College, the University of Trinity College, and Victoria University, and generally to advance the interests of teachers, researchers and librarians in Canadian universities."[4] UTFA's mission statements on the website and in the annual report emphasize that UTFA is a democratically constituted body that seeks to represent the interests of faculty and librarians at the University of Toronto. Its focus is on negotiating and enforcing workplace standards through bargaining, grievance handling and other forms of advocacy on a range of issues. The mission statement on the website also states that a further aspect of UTFA's mission is to be "an effective actor in the public sphere" on political issues that matter to members.

By contrast, the mission statement of the University of British Columbia is solely focused on internal employment matters: "The UBCFA acts as the bargaining agent of all faculty, librarians and program directors employed by the University of British Columbia and regulates relations between our members and the University through collective bargaining." Similarly, the Carleton University Academic

[4] While the mission statement refers to "researchers", UTFA does not represent Research Assistants.

Staff Association defines its purpose as "to promote the welfare and interests of the Carleton University academic staff, including the regulation of employment relations between the University and the academic staff, and to affiliate with international, national, provincial and regional organizations for the advancement of the interests of the academic staff." The Association of Academic Staff of the University of Alberta describes its mission as follows:

> The AASUA organizes and supports collective bargaining as a means to protect, strengthen, and advance the collective interests of its members. The AASUA also works to promote the core principles of the academy, foremost amongst them academic freedom, to ensure higher education's contribution to the common good. As a member-driven democratic organization, the AASUA aspires in all of its work, activities, and decision-making to maximize the full participation and engagement of all of its members while promoting equity, diversity, dignity, and economic security for all.

The survey found that there is a strong consensus amongst UTFA members about what the association's primary mission should be – it exists to represent the employment interests of faculty and librarians at the University of Toronto by negotiating salaries and enforcing collective rights. When asked about the most important things the association does, nearly 96% of respondents to the membership survey identified negotiating salaries, benefits and working conditions. This was followed by defending members' rights through the grievance process (76.3%) and protecting academic freedom (40.2%).

These results were echoed in the interviews. Nearly all interviewees felt UTFA's primary mission is to represent the employment-related interests of its members. The most common responses focused on the importance of UTFA's role in improving working conditions, advocating for members' rights and negotiating salaries and benefits. Like the overall membership, most interviewees felt the association does a very effective job on these core priorities.

Although there was broad agreement on UTFA's core mission, views differed on the scope of its mandate. Some interviewees, for instance, argued that UTFA cannot limit itself just to negotiating terms and conditions of employment but must also engage with the broader political environment. From this perspective, the association and its members must address political and social issues, such as funding decisions and political interference in universities, as external threats to academic rights and labour. Others, however, cautioned that UTFA should be vigilant against drifting too far from its core mission by taking positions on political and social issues that may be divisive within the membership or have little direct connection to members' working conditions.

On balance, UTFA's membership favours a mission and mandate more focused on labour-related workplace issues and less on social and political affairs. For instance, when asked about the least important thing the association does, the most frequent response from those participating in the membership survey was lobbying governments (44.6%).[5] Of those responding to the open-ended question of what one thing they would like to see change at UTFA, the most frequently cited theme was a desire to reduce political advocacy and limit engagement in social justice and external political issues (18.9%).

Interviewees also weighed in on this question. Four of the 42 people interviewed were strongly in favour of UTFA taking on a more "social union" orientation by engaging in broader political and social justice activism. They argued this would make UTFA more relevant, allow it to better engage members and help build an activist base within the association. The majority, however, were opposed to UTFA straying from what they felt was its primary mandate to advance the employment-related rights of

[5] This does not necessarily mean that members think influencing government policy is not useful. Clearly political developments can directly impact the academic workplace such as funding decisions or changes to labour law. It may be that members perceive broader advocacy and lobbying work to be the primary role for CAUT and the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA), organizations to which UTFA is affiliated.

members. Just over half of those interviewed noted that the controversy over the pro-Palestinian student encampment and subsequent divestment motions had sharply divided the membership and, they argued, distracted UTFA from its core priorities. This sentiment was also echoed in the membership survey. Of those who responded to the open-ended question about how the association could be more effective in the future (n=522), the most common response (15.3%) was to limit the association's political advocacy on external matters followed, relatedly, by 14.8% who urged the association to focus solely on bargaining salaries and benefits.

These different views about the mandate and mission of the association are not unique to UTFA. Many academic staff associations have struggled with competing demands from within their membership to either remain neutral or take an active stance on what can sometimes be divisive political issues, like Israel and Palestine. These are complex matters and there is no simple solution to how democratically run associations can best manage these competing interests within the membership. Nevertheless, UTFA could consider clarifying its mission statement to focus on what the majority of members feel is the most important purpose of the association. UTFA could also develop policy or guidelines to determine when the association weighs in, if at all, on broader political and social matters. For instance, UTFA may wish to specify that it will take positions on political and social issues that do not directly affect the employment conditions and rights of members only when supported by a resolution at a membership meeting.

It would also be helpful for UTFA to harmonize the different iterations of its mission statement and provide a more concise statement. The three variations of the mission statements that currently exist could create confusion or disputes over UTFA's role and scope of activities. Mission is normally something that would be refined as part of a broader strategic planning exercise. UTFA could benefit from strategic planning that focuses on identifying strategic goals that are in alignment with a common

sense of purpose, mission, and scope. While consideration should be given to the appropriate timing, a thorough strategic planning exercise may help generate a broader discussion within the membership about what the Association's goals should be and how it will achieve those objectives over a specified time frame.

Summary of Issues

- Divided views on UTFA taking positions on external political matters
- Several variations of the mission statement
- Some elements of the mission statements may not be aligned with membership priorities

Summary of Recommendations

- Draft a revised and unified mission statement that clearly and concisely articulates UTFA's primary purpose. Ideally, the review of the mission statement should be part of a strategic planning exercise that involves leadership and members
- Develop a policy that provides guidelines on whether UTFA will take positions on external political matters and, if so, under what conditions

Theme 2: UTFA Council

UTFA Council is the supreme governing body of the association. According to Article 12 of the By-laws, Council is charged with, amongst other things, approving the annual budget, appointing members of the Executive (excluding the President), ratifying agreements, and approving all positions, goals, and objectives of the association. Members of Council, in turn, are responsible for representing the interest of their constituencies and for keeping members of their constituency informed of UTFA's activities.

UTFA Council attracted a lot of comments from interviewees during the review. Almost everyone who participated in the interviews felt that Council was not functioning as an effective governing body. The problems identified ranged from the size and representativeness of Council to the frequency and conduct of meetings.

Most interviewees described Council as unwieldy. Its size and frequent meeting schedule place significant administrative demands on the Executive and staff. Several participants also noted that Council's large membership often leaves too little time for meaningful discussion, causing meetings to feel rushed and leaving some Council members feeling that their time and contributions are not being put to effective use. While the size of Council is intended to ensure representation from across the workplace, most interviewees argued that unfilled vacancies in some constituency seats and regular acclamations in others raise questions about how truly democratic or representative it is. Many suggested that some members of Council do not properly consult with or inform their constituencies about UTFA's activities. This latter point was echoed in the membership survey. Less than a third of respondents reported that they are made aware of UTFA's activities through their constituency representative.

Another common issue raised by interviewees concerned what they perceived as a sometimes-murky division of authority between Council and the Executive. Some current and previous members of Council and the Executive expressed uncertainty at times about which decisions lie with which body. Between Council meetings, the Executive is charged with carrying out the activities of the association (By-law 2.3), but some of the interviewees said they were unclear about what day-to-day matters the Executive can act on, as opposed to when the Executive needs to seek approval from Council. It was observed that this has at times led to jurisdictional disputes between the two bodies that can hamper effective and timely decision-making.

The above issues resulted in considerable resources being expended and the lack of a clearly defined mandate, roles and accountability contributed to unnecessary debate and conflict. In such an environment, a small number of the loudest members can take up disproportionate space, making it more difficult for Council to engage in focused and productive discussion.

A clear delineation of powers and responsibilities is good governance practice and is especially important in organizations with multiple governing bodies like UTFA. Without well-defined lines of authority there is a risk that jurisdictional conflicts may emerge. UTFA may wish to follow the lead of other faculty associations with similar structures that have addressed this matter by developing a clear delegation of authority matrix and/or including provisions in their constitution that authorize a delegated body to make timely decisions. The University of Western Ontario Faculty Association's governing documents, for instance, provide that in urgent circumstances the Executive Committee "may exercise the powers of the Board of Directors provided that any such exercise of power must be subsequently confirmed by the Board for it to be effective."

While nearly everyone who participated in the interviews agreed that Council is not functioning effectively as it should, there were differences of opinion about what should be done as a remedy. Most people felt Council should either be eliminated, turned into an advisory body to the Executive, or transformed into a "stewards' council" that is common in labour unions. A small minority of interviewees were opposed to any changes that they felt would weaken Council. Those who expressed this view argued that Council was needed because of the unique unicameral governance structure at the University of Toronto. Unlike all other universities in Canada, the University of Toronto does not have a senate that is granted authority over educational policy. That function is merged with administrative decision-making in the University's Governing Council.

Although the absence of a senate is significant for UTFA and its members, it is not clear that Council is or was intended to function as an academic governance body. It does not formulate educational policy or make academic decisions. Its role is that of a board of directors with its primary responsibility being overseeing the association's affairs related to negotiating and enforcing professional and employment rights.

The comparative review of governance practices at other faculty associations revealed that most do not have a board/council structure like UTFA. The University of British Columbia Faculty Association, with roughly the same membership size as UTFA, is governed without a council. It has an executive committee comprised of 16 members: the four officers (president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer), the chairs of 6 standing committees, and 6 members at large. All executive members, except for the representative of the UBC Okanagan campus, are elected directly by the full membership. Similarly, the University of Saskatchewan Faculty Association is governed by an executive of 12 members, and the Dalhousie Faculty Association is managed by an executive of 5 elected officers and 10 elected members-at-large.

Some other associations have a council or board, but one that is advisory in nature. The Toronto Metropolitan Faculty Association's "Representative Council" is composed of unit representatives and has a mandate to serve as a "forum for open discussion and exchange." The council can make recommendations to the executive, but it is not a decision-making body. At McMaster University, the Faculty Council's primary responsibility is to serve as a "conduit" between the executive and academic units within the workplace. The Faculty Association of the University of Waterloo has a 50-member "Council of Representatives" with a mandate to "act as liaison between the directors [executive committee members] and the membership, to act in an advisory capacity to the directors, and to promote the benefits of membership in the Association to faculty members." The University of Western Ontario Faculty Association has a Board of Directors of about 28 members (including 5 officers) but has also created a Faculty Stewards Council elected by members of each academic unit of the institution. Stewards act as points of contact for the association in each unit and are responsible for disseminating information about bargaining and the collective agreement. This is a common structure in most labour unions where stewards serve to collect and share issues arising in different units in the workplace, coordinate membership outreach and organizing and identify potential grievances.

Those associations with a governing council/board structure like that of UTFA also tend to have many positions on these bodies. The largest is the University of Manitoba Faculty Association with about 90 members. The Queen's University Faculty Association's Council of Representatives has 41 members, while the Association of Professors of the University of Ottawa's Board of Directors is comprised of 52. Compared to labour unions and non-profit associations generally, it is highly unusual and not considered to be good governance practice for a governing body to be composed of so many members. Large boards are often difficult to organize and manage from an administrative perspective. It can be challenging to fill all positions, preparations for meetings can be burdensome on staff, meetings can be

more time consuming than necessary and quorum can be difficult to achieve. This, in turn, can militate against effective and timely decision-making.

UTFA should consider reforming Council into an advisory body to the Executive. This structure would be consistent with that of most other similar academic staff associations and more conducive to a labour-focused organization. Making Council advisory would still allow for constituency unit representation while clarifying lines of authority. An advisory Council would not need to meet nearly as often – perhaps just twice a year – thereby freeing the association and staff from the administratively burdensome task of preparing for monthly meetings. In this new model, Council or Steward representatives, with training, could be tasked with engaging and organizing members in their constituencies, something that is essential if UTFA wishes to strengthen its organizational power as a labour-focused association.

If UTFA were to adopt this new role for Council, significant revisions to the Constitution and the By-law would be required. The current decision-making authority of Council would necessarily have to be re-assigned to other governing bodies. In this regard, most of Council's current responsibilities might be better placed with the membership and exercised through the annual general meeting as is the case for most academic staff associations and labour unions. As democratic membership-based organizations, most academic staff associations are governed under the authority of meetings of the membership. For example, the University of Manitoba Faculty Association's Constitution states: "The Regular members of the Association, duly assembled in a properly called general meeting of the Association, shall be the highest authority for deciding the policies and managing the affairs of UMFA." Similarly, the Constitution of the University of Saskatchewan Faculty Association provides the following: "The governing body of the Association shall be the regular members of the Association in general meeting (whether a regular or special general meeting), and all policies, rules and regulations enacted by the

general meeting of the Association shall bind all members and officers of the Association." The By-laws of the University of Calgary Faculty Association (TUCFA) state: "The Membership shall be the final authority of the Association, subject to the decisions of the Labour Relations Board."

UTFA could consider amending its Constitution to specify that the annual general membership meeting is the supreme governing body with the authority to approve the budget, appoint auditors, ratify agreements, and elect or appoint specified members of the Executive and committees. Expanding the authority of the general membership meeting could promote greater democratic accountability and encourage more engagement from members. Any remaining responsibilities that currently reside with Council could be assigned to the Executive and/or the officers as appropriate.

A final issue raised about membership meetings and the Constitution was that of the provision for special membership meetings. Article 10.2 provides that a general meeting of the association can be called "at the written request to the President of fifty regular members of the Association, the request to be accompanied by the proposed agenda of the meeting." While it is an important democratic principle to allow the membership to request a special meeting, some of the interviewees felt that the threshold of 50 members was too low and could lead to a very small minority of members abusing the provision for special meetings. Fifty members currently represent just a little over 1% of UTFA's total membership. Compared to other academic staff associations, the percentage threshold at UTFA is amongst the lowest. The University of Manitoba Faculty Association allows for 30 members to trigger a special membership meeting, equivalent to 2.3% of the active membership. The Dalhousie Faculty Association Constitution sets the number at 25 (or 2.1% of the membership), and similarly the Association of Professors of the University of Ottawa allows 25 members or 2.0% of the membership to call a special meeting. At the Queen's University Faculty Association, the equivalent numbers are 20 and

1.4%. The University of Western Ontario Faculty Association has a lower threshold than UTFA: just 15 members can call for a special membership meeting.

Rather than set a threshold by a fixed number, the University of British Columbia Faculty Association By-law provides that members representing 2.5% of the whole membership is required to call a special meeting. The benefit of setting a percentage figure over a fixed number is that it can account for changes in the size of the total membership. If the membership grows over time, a fixed number will represent less of the overall share of the membership. UTFA may wish to consider amending the Constitution to provide that special meetings will be called upon receipt of a petition signed by no fewer than a percentage of the regular membership – a figure in the range of 2.5% to 3.0% would be in line with other associations.

Summary of Issues

- Council size is unwieldy
- No clear delineation of powers and responsibilities between Executive and Council
- Membership not engaged through Council
- Threshold number to trigger a special membership meeting is low

Summary of Recommendations

- Consider transforming Council into an advisory body or a stewards' council
- Reduce the number of meetings to twice a year
- Provide a clear mandate to Council members/stewards that their role is to engage and organize members in their constituencies, to act as the point of contact for the association and to advise the UTFA Executive and Officers
- Amend the Constitution and By-laws to grant the Annual General Membership meeting the decision-making authority that currently resides with Council
- Ensure there is a delegation of authority matrix within UTFA and present an annual delegation of authority motion to general membership meeting
- Amend Article 10.2 (iv) to read: "at the written request to the President of regular members of the Association representing at least 2.5% of the regular membership, the request to be accompanied by the proposed agenda of the meeting."

Theme 3: Executive Elections

The only position on the UTFA Executive that is directly elected by the membership is the President. All other positions are appointed or elected by Council. This is not common practice in most faculty associations where, with some exceptions for constituency-based representatives such as librarians and contract academic staff, executive members are elected by the entire membership. For instance, the Association of Professors of the University of Ottawa has a similar overall governance structure to UTFA, but all executive members are elected by the membership. The President is elected by a secret ballot prior to the annual general membership meeting, with the remaining members of the executive committee elected during the meeting. The membership of the Dalhousie Faculty Association, the Syndicat général des professeurs et professeures de l'Université de Montréal, the McGill Association of University Teachers, the McMaster University Faculty Association, the Association of Academic Staff of the University of Alberta, the University of British Columbia Faculty Association, and the Toronto Metropolitan Faculty Association, all elect the executive committee by way of a general election.

The scope of the UTFA President's role is normative for the sector. However, as the only leader of the UTFA Executive who is elected by the members directly, the President is the official spokesperson for the Association, and the leader with the highest degree of responsibility and accountability to the members.

In some other associations, all the officers on the executive committee are elected by the membership, and remaining seats are appointed by the executive, board, or Council. The President, Vice-President, Secretary, and the Treasurer of the Queen's University Faculty Association are elected by the entire membership. Other members of the Executive, apart from the Past-President, are recommended by the Elections and Resolutions Committee to Council for appointment. At the

University of Western Ontario Faculty Association, the President, Vice-President, Past-President, Treasurer, and Secretary are elected by the membership, a Part-Time Director is elected by contract academic staff members, and 3 additional directors are elected by the Board to serve on the Executive Committee.

A strong majority of interviewees who participated in the review supported expanding the number of executive positions elected by the general membership. It was expressed that more elections would ensure more executive positions are directly accountable to the membership. However, there were differences of opinion about which positions should be elected by the entire membership and how frequently elections should take place. Most people felt that having the membership elect at least the officers – the President, Vice-Presidents, and Treasurer – would help make UTFA more democratic and encourage greater membership engagement in the association.

A few participants, however, expressed concerns that electing all members of the Executive might require the staggering of terms of office and therefore result in yearly elections being held. The UTFA presidential election, it was noted, already involves a lengthy and complicated process. If more executive positions were added to the mix, it might create additional administrative burdens on the UTFA office. If UTFA were to consider expanding the number of positions to be elected, it may wish to consult with other associations who hold regular elections for their executive committee. While the concerns about the logistics of managing more elections are well noted, many large associations, like the University of British Columbia Faculty Association, seem to handle this challenge.

Additionally, it was noted by a few participants interviewed that certain positions on the Executive require specialized expertise and knowledge, including the Vice-President (Salaries, Benefits, Pensions, and Workload) and Vice-President (Grievances). There was some worry that opening these

positions to a general election may not necessarily attract qualified candidates or guarantee that they are elected. This is a matter that other academic staff associations have managed by empowering the executive to appoint a grievance officer and a chief negotiator to fulfill these and other specialized roles.

Overall, there was strong support expressed for expanding the number of executive positions elected by the membership. There is a compelling case to be made that at least the Treasurer and members-at-large, in addition to the President, be selected through a general election. Two of the Vice-President positions, subject to recommended role clarifications discussed below, may need to be appointed by the Executive based on expertise. Some of the committee chairs could be elected by the general membership as well, except possibly those representing identified appointment categories (Librarians, Retired, and Teaching Stream).

Summary of Issues

- The only position on the UTFA Executive that is directly elected by the membership is the President
- All other positions are appointed or elected by Council
- Legitimacy and responsibility concentrated on one position, rather than distributed across the leadership
- Tension between democratically elected positions and retention of expertise

Summary of Recommendations

- Explore ways to expand the number of executive positions elected by the membership
- Ensure expanded elections are administratively feasible and appropriately staggered
- Consider whether there is a need to appoint specialized executive positions, such as those responsible for negotiations and grievances

Theme 4: Executive Members' Role Clarity, Responsibility, and Accountability

The review heard about a potential need for role clarity for some of the officer positions on the Executive. There are 5 officers within UTFA: President; Vice-President (Salary, Benefits, Pensions and Workload); Vice-President (Grievances); Vice-President (University and External Affairs); and Treasurer. Article 3 of the By-law assigns the President the authority to act as the official representative and spokesperson of UTFA, to be principal signing authority, to manage staff, chair Executive Committee meetings, and serve *ex officio* on all UTFA committees. While a minority of interviewees felt the position of President has too much authority in UTFA, the scope of responsibilities and duties provided in the UTFA By-law is common amongst all faculty associations and trade unions.

UTFA is unique in that it has 3 Vice-President positions who are officers. The terms of reference of UTFA's three Vice-President positions are also outlined in detail in the By-laws. The responsibilities of the Vice-President (Salaries, Benefits, Pensions, and Workload) "consist only of matters relating to negotiations or agreements with the University of Toronto Administration" and include chairing the Salary, Benefits, Pensions and Workload Committee, recommending members to serve on the negotiating team, and normally serves as the Chief Negotiator. The Vice-President (Grievances) chairs the Grievance Committee, oversees case files, and represents UTFA at the Joint Committee with the University administration. In other associations the equivalent positions would be the chief negotiator (or contract administrator), and the grievance officer. These positions are not uniformly designated as officers in other academic staff associations.

The Vice-President (University and External Affairs) is charged with maintaining UTFA's relationship with CAUT, OCUFA, and other faculty associations; chairing the University and External Affairs Committee; representing UTFA's positions to government officials and advocacy groups; and serving as UTFA's delegate to CAUT Council and the OCUFA Board. Several interviewees commented that these responsibilities seem to overlap with the duties of the President. It was noted that the President has the responsibility of being the official representative and spokesperson of the Association and yet is not the official delegate and voice of UTFA at CAUT Council.[6]

Depending upon the outcome of UTFA's review of its mission statement, it may be that the role assigned to the Vice-President (University and External Affairs) of "representing UTFA's positions to government officials" may no longer be relevant. In any case, because the position does appear to overlap significantly with that of the President, UTFA should consider either eliminating or converting the Vice-President (University and External Affairs) into another position responsible for a different portfolio.

Further, UTFA should explore restructuring titles and roles on the Executive Committee to better align with best practices at other associations. This could involve reducing the number of Vice-Presidents to one and renaming the Vice-President (Salary, Benefits, Pensions and Workload) as Chief Negotiator and the Vice-President (Grievances) as the Chief Grievance Officer. In this scenario, the Vice-President (University and External Affairs) position could be replaced with simply a position of Vice-

[6] It is rare for faculty associations to appoint someone other than the president as the official delegate to CAUT Council. Of the comparator associations included in this review, only the McGill Association of University Teachers and the Toronto Metropolitan Faculty Association have a designated position of Vice-President (External) that serves as the CAUT delegate.

President. The roles and responsibilities of the revamped Vice-President role could include the following:

- Supports and cooperates with the President and Treasurer
- Fulfills the duties of the President in their absence
- Serves on UTFA Committees and/or as a representative of the Association on University-wide committees as requested by the President
- Assists the President in deciding on all questions of order according to parliamentary rules
- Provides support, guidance and advice to the Executive Board
- Performs such other duties as may be required by the President and/or Executive Committee

As suggested above, the UTFA Executive could be given authority to appoint the Chief Negotiator and Chief Grievance Officer based on specified criteria of expertise. This is consistent with CAUT policy that recommends the Executive be delegated authority from the membership to appoint the chief negotiator and negotiating team. The rationale is that the Executive is the body that is given the responsibility for overseeing the day-to-day administration of the affairs of the association, including the negotiation and enforcement of the collective agreement or MoA.[7]

If UTFA were to pursue these changes, it may also wish to consider the possibility of adding additional members to the Executive. UTFA is the second largest faculty association in Canada and it is operating within an increasingly demanding environment. It needs an Executive that is large enough so that it is broadly representative of the membership, but not so large as to become unwieldy. To facilitate informed and democratic decision-making, it is important that there is appropriate Executive representation of different categories of appointment, academic units and equity-deserving groups.

[7] See CAUT Guidelines for Decision-making Within the Academic Staff Association During the Collective Bargaining Period.

Majority decided elections may not necessarily guarantee minority constituencies are adequately represented and gaps may emerge. One way to address this would be to provide in the Constitution that the Executive may appoint up to 2 or 3 additional members-at-large to fill identified gaps in representation and/or expertise. In this scenario, UTFA's new Executive might look as follows:

- President
- Vice-President
- Treasurer
- Chief Grievance Officer (appointed)
- Chief Negotiator (appointed)
- Chair, Appointments Committee
- Chair, Equity Committee
- Chair, Librarians' Committee
- Chair, Membership Committee
- Chair, Retired Members Committee
- Chair, Teaching Stream Committee
- Members-at-large (3 positions)
- Members-at-large (2-3 positions) (appointed as needed)

Additionally, UTFA should ensure all Executive members have role clarity. It was noted by several interviewees that the Members-at-large have no specific or official portfolio. The chairs of committees have more clearly defined roles, but several interviewees who served as chairs indicated they would have liked more direction about what specific issues and work they should be bringing to the committees. Many interviewees felt unprepared when joining the Executive and committees and felt they had to learn by doing.

These issues might be addressed through better onboarding and training for Executive Committee members, including guidance on roles, responsibilities, and processes. Additionally, it may be helpful if the President were to issue annual mandate letters to members of the Executive. Ideally,

the letters would be aligned with the Association's strategic plan, but even in the absence of a plan, the President could allocate specific mandates and tasks based on current and anticipated priorities.

The additional benefit of mandate letters is that Executive members could also be held accountable for delivering on those mandates. The issue of accountability arose in many conversations during the interviews. For context, there had been several resignations from the Executive in the previous months, and some interviewees expressed frustrations that some Executive members were not doing work that was expected of them. Other interviewees expressed dissatisfaction that individual Executive members were not afforded a greater degree of freedom and autonomy. Staff indicated that they often had to follow up on tasks that were supposed to be done by Executive members. These frustrations may have been compounded by the absence of any formal mechanism for addressing these concerns.

Mandate letters would assist in ensuring that expectations are clear and transparent but might not entirely resolve those rare cases where an Executive member is not fulfilling their obligations. In fact, UTFA's existing governance structure may complicate an effective resolution in such instances. Executive Committee members, apart from the President, can only be removed through a special vote at UTFA Council. If UTFA were to reform Council and its Executive Committee structure along the lines recommended above, then those positions appointed by the Executive Committee could also be subject to removal by the Executive Committee. That said, positions elected by the general membership could only be removed by the membership.

UTFA could also try to set clearer expectations for prospective candidates to the Executive Committee. When issuing calls for elections, the Association could include a statement about the skills and commitment required. Some of these may include the following:

- **Vision, Leadership, and Independence** – the ability to see the big picture and to help create and, if necessary, reset strategy and policy to help the organization achieve its mission; the ability to be objective and to focus on the overall best interests of the organization
- **Advocacy, Stewardship, and Integrity** – the ability to serve and promote the best interests and goals of the Association without forgetting the interests of UTFA's members, and without being distracted by extraneous facts or factors or having a conflict of interest
- **Knowledge** – the willingness to become thoroughly familiar with the mission and how the Association carries out the mission on a day-to-day basis through its structure and operations, as well as the willingness to understand and adhere to applicable governance principles, including fiduciary duties and responsibilities
- **Personal Commitment and Diligence** – the willingness to take the necessary time and make the necessary effort to fulfill Executive member responsibilities, including regular attendance at meetings; understanding the strategic, financial, and operational issues facing the organization; asking questions; and following up as needed
- **Collegiality** – the ability to work well with others and to show respect for the ideas and views of fellow Executive members and staff, and the understanding that the Executive operates as a body; and
- **Life Experience and Expertise** – UTFA could indicate that it seeks to recruit Executive members who represent the diversity of the membership and can help provide leadership based on their experience, expertise, and their representation of key constituencies.

Finally, the review identified a need to clarify lines of accountability between the President, Executive members, and Council. Pursuant to UTFA's By-laws, members of the Executive Committee are accountable to the President and to Council. This provision is potentially problematic from a basic governance perspective. Only the President is directly elected by the membership and is therefore accountable to the membership. The remaining positions on the Executive are elected, appointed, or confirmed by and accountable to Council. Where the positions of the President and the majority of Council members on a matter for decision may diverge, other members of the Executive may be placed in a conflicting position. In these circumstances, they cannot be accountable to the President and to Council at the same time. One way to address this matter, and consistent with the recommendations

above, would be to reform Council and empower the membership to directly elect more positions on the Executive.

Ambiguous roles and responsibilities may have contributed to conflict between the Executive Committee in the recent past. Interviewees who served on the Executive at that time noted that it was a challenge for the Association to manage this conflict. It is impossible, and not desirable, to eliminate all conflict, particularly in diverse membership-based organizations. Differences of opinion can be helpful in raising and resolving problems, clarifying issues and promoting positive organizational change. However, if not managed properly, conflicts can become destructive and cause organizational paralysis, divert energy from more important issues and harm the morale of individuals and groups. Providing greater clarity around roles and expectations of Executive members may help. Beyond this, however, UTFA should consider adopting a conflict management process that includes conflict management training for Executive members and mechanisms and procedures whereby conflict can be negotiated and, if necessary, mediated.

Summary of Issues

- Role of Vice Presidents redundant or undefined
- Lack of clear mandate and responsibilities for members of the Executive
- Executive requires subject-matter experts
- Unclear expectations from Executive and potential Executive members
- Ambiguity around roles, responsibilities and decision-making authority may contribute to conflict

Summary of Recommendations

- Consider eliminating the position of Vice-President (University and External Affairs) and replace with a generic Vice-President position
- Consider renaming the Vice-President (Salaries, Benefits, Pensions, and Workload) as Chief Negotiator and the Vice-President (Grievances) as the Chief Grievance Officer; they could be appointed by the Executive as both positions require significant experience and expertise
- Assess whether there is a need to expand the size of the Executive to ensure inclusive representation of the membership and when gaps emerge, consider empowering the Executive to make 2-3 additional member-at-large appointments
- Develop better onboarding and training for Executive Committee members, including guidance on roles, responsibilities and processes
- Explore the desirability of the President issuing annual mandate letters to all members of the Executive that outline their duties, portfolio and expectations
- Include a statement about the desired skills and level of commitment required and expected of candidates when issuing a call for nominations to the Executive Committee
- Develop and implement procedures for conflict management within the Executive

Theme 5: Workload

How the work of the Association is distributed and undertaken was an additional theme raised by most interviewees. Given UTFA's large membership size and the nature of its status as a non-certified association, grievance handling and seemingly constant negotiations with the administration demand considerable time and resources. These workload pressures have sometimes become a point of frustration for volunteers and staff within the Association. Some interviewees highlighted what they perceived to be a gendered dimension of workload distribution within UTFA, with women seemingly taking on more of the tasks. Others raised questions, as noted earlier, about holding Executive members accountable for work they are assigned. Finally, there were several comments about the appropriate division of labour between elected officers and staff.

Strategic planning could help UTFA set clearer priorities and aid in operational and work planning. However, in the interim, more attention might be paid to articulating expectations of Executive Committee members and ensuring they are accountable for delivering on their responsibilities. Presidential mandate letters to each member of the Executive, as noted above, might be a way of setting these expectations. In doing so, however, there could be clearer lines drawn between the political work of the organization for which Executive members are responsible, and the support and expertise provided to them by staff. [8]

Some interviewees suggested that UTFA's committees could be empowered to take on more of the work of the Association. The UTFA Constitution provides for 3 standing committees: Salaries,

[8] Several interviewees suggested that the solution to the workload challenge is to hire more staff. It may be the case that more staff are needed, but this should not be done in a way that simply shifts political work from the elected officers to staff.

Pensions, Benefits and Workload; Grievance; and the University and External Affairs Committees. The Constitution also provides for a Nominating Committee that is responsible for compiling a slate of nominees for vacancies on the Executive for the positions of the three Vice-Presidents, Treasurer, Chairs of Standing Committees, and Members-at-Large.

In addition to what is provided in the Constitution, UTFA Council has created the following standing committees:

- Appointments Committee: Advises on matters relating to the University's Policy on Appointments, including procedures for hiring, promotion, tenure and dismissal
- Central Health and Safety Committee: Advises and assists the Joint Health and Safety Committee
- Equity Committee: Advises on all matters relating to equity, diversity and inclusion
- Financial Advisory Committee: Chaired by the Treasurer, the committee advises Council on UTFA's budget and expenditures
- Librarians' Committee: Advises Council on matters concerning librarian members
- Membership Committee: Advises Council on promoting membership engagement and participation in UTFA
- Pension Committee: Advises Council on matters related to the pension plan
- Retired Members Committee: Advises Council on matters of concern to retired members of UTFA
- Teaching-Stream Committee: Advises Council on matters of concern to members holding teaching-stream appointments

UTFA has a significant number of standing committees compared to other faculty associations. For example, the University of British Columbia Faculty Association, the Association of Academic Staff of the University of Alberta, the Queen's University Faculty Association, and the Carleton University Academic Staff Association have just 6 standing committees each. At the higher end of the comparator group, the University of Western Ontario Faculty Association and the Association of Professors of the

University of Ottawa have 9 standing committees. There may be good reasons why UTFA needs more standing committees than other associations, but the Association should consider conducting a strategic review of all the committees and their terms of reference to ensure they are aligned with UTFA's mandate and objectives as a labour-focused organization. For now, the Financial Advisory Committee might be better constituted as an Audit Committee, chaired by the Treasurer, that meets independently with the auditors and reports to the Executive and the Annual General Membership Meeting. Specific consideration should also be given to the mandate of the University and External Affairs Committee if UTFA considers eliminating or reshaping the position of Vice-President (University and External Affairs).

Generally, interviewees felt that most committees are working well, but that better onboarding, training of members and clearer mandates could improve their functioning. UTFA's committees play an important role in assisting with the development of policy and undertaking the core work of the Association. A strategic review of existing committees, their terms of reference, recruitment, composition and onboarding would ensure they are aligned with UTFA's strategic objectives and priorities.

Summary of Issues

- Too many standing committees
- No clear mandates or roles for existing standing committees
- Unequal assignment of work, with women carrying more administrative duties

Summary of Recommendations

- Clarify the distinction between the roles and responsibilities of Executive members and staff and ensure that Executive members are aware of their responsibility to be responsive to staff requests
- Establish a regular training session for the Chairs and members of UTFA committees to review their roles and expectations for the year and provide Chairs with resources to assist them in developing committee effectiveness
- Conduct a review of the terms of reference of standing committees to ensure their mandates and composition are aligned with UTFA's strategic priorities as a labour-focused organization.

Theme 6: Improving UTFA's Effectiveness

The final theme that arose during the review relates to ways that members feel UTFA could become more effective in the future. Most responses echoed many of the themes noted above and focused on the need for mission clarity, governance reform and better democratic engagement with the membership. There is very strong support for and satisfaction with the Association amongst the membership, but many interviewees and survey respondents noted that there are emerging challenges in the academic workplace and some potential limits to what UTFA can achieve within its current structure and practices.

Almost all interviewees felt that the current structure requires significant structural and systemic change. Interviewees observed that the existing structure allowed internal conflict to escalate while providing insufficient support or processes to manage it effectively. Without a clear framework for addressing disagreements, disputes that might otherwise have been resolved constructively too often became personal and confrontational, yielding to the most outspoken and persistent voices. In keeping with the experiences of many faculty associations across the country, polarizing topics such as encampments and divestment overwhelmed UTFA's capacity to resolve conflict. Some interviewees observed parallels between UTFA's "old-fashioned" structure and the archaic decision-making structure at the University of Toronto. Broadly speaking, interviewees viewed reform as an opportunity for the organization to put its stated ideals into practice.

In the interviews, a strong majority of participants also supported unionization in principle. They argued that transforming UTFA into a legal trade union would increase its bargaining power and force the administration to negotiate more comprehensive agreements. Just three of the interviewees openly

expressed opposition to certification and argued that UTFA should develop a less adversarial relationship with the administration. These numbers are consistent with the survey.

When asked about what one thing they think needs to change about how the Association is run, those who responded to the survey question (n=434) most often cited a desire to reduce political advocacy and limit engagement in broader social justice issues (18.9%). Respondents in this group argued that UTFA can be more effective if it focuses its activities and time on core workplace and employment matters.

The next most common response to the survey question on what members would like to see changed about UTFA centred on the desire of respondents to see UTFA pursue Union certification (14.3%), as well as governance reform (11.5%), with respondents calling for better transparency and democratic oversight. Specific recommendations included reforming the role and authority of Council, empowering the membership within UTFA's governance structure and enacting a clearer distribution of decision-making authority within the Association. Others suggested a need for expanded democratic participation of members, including direct election of all leadership positions and broader member involvement in decision-making processes.

Better communications and membership engagement were also cited as critical for UTFA's success in the future. Overall, most survey respondents indicated they feel adequately informed about the Association's activities, events and initiatives. Nearly seven in ten (68.0%) reported being somewhat informed, while an additional 15.7% consider themselves very well informed. Only a small minority indicated low awareness, with 5.9% somewhat uninformed and 2.5% responded they were not well informed. When asked how they are made aware of UTFA's activities, e-mail was by far the most

common response (92.7%). Meetings were the second most cited form of engagement (40.0%), followed by updates from constituency representatives (37.7%).

The survey responses indicate that members feel UTFA does a good job of communicating and engaging with them, but that there is some room for improvement. The website was often identified as needing a redesign and revamp. Interviewees highlighted that UTFA could be more strategic in communicating with members. For instance, it was felt there are many issues that UTFA handles of which members are not always fully informed. It was recommended that the Membership Committee take on the role of developing a strategic communications strategy for the Association. Others suggested UTFA could do more to share and celebrate its successes and make its work more transparent.

Summary of Issues

- Challenges with conflict management
- Support for unionization but strategies and priorities vary
- Membership divided on political activism outside core terms and conditions of employment

Summary of Recommendations

- Need to develop more robust conflict management principles and frameworks
- Continue to explore the desirability and feasibility of unionization
- Develop a strategic communications and membership engagement strategy; ideally this would occur as part of a broader strategic planning exercise

Summary

The University of Toronto Faculty Association is held in very high regard by its members, and to date, it has been remarkably successful in securing better conditions of employment and defending members' rights despite its limited legal scope as a non-certified employee association. It has evolved since its inception from a loosely structured and informal committee of faculty to a more complex and labour-focused organization. Meanwhile, new challenges are emerging that are testing the capacity, effectiveness and sustainability of the Association. The expansion of issues on which it can negotiate with the administration and the number and complexity of grievances that are arising are putting a significant workload strain on the Association and its leadership and staff. The political environment in which it operates is also becoming more challenging and complex.

There is no indication that these pressures are temporary. On the contrary, driven by broader structural changes within the University and across the post-secondary education system in Canada generally, the demands on the Association are likely to continue to grow. To meet this challenge, UTFA will need to think strategically about its mission and governance structure to ensure it is fit for purpose.

Key recommendations for how UTFA might meet this challenge include clarifying the mission and purpose of the Association, eliminating or reforming Council, empowering the authority of the membership to promote greater democratic engagement and accountability, expanding the number of Executive positions elected by the membership, and re-focusing positions and roles on the Executive Committee. These changes, if adopted, would require substantive amendments to the Constitution and By-laws that should be undertaken in broad consultation with the membership. Whatever recommendations UTFA chooses to explore, the goal should be to ensure that its governance structure is better aligned with that of a labour-focused organization.

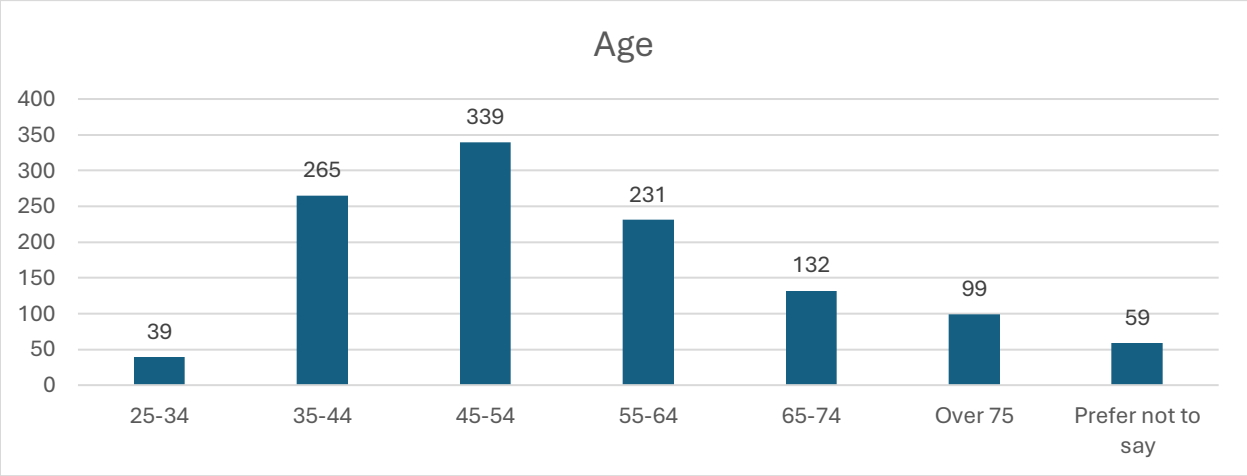
Appendix 1: UTFA Membership Survey Results

Methodology and Background

The survey was distributed by email by the Canadian Association of University Teachers to UTFA members, retired UTFA members and UTFA federated members. In total, the survey population consisted of 4,077 individuals. The survey was conducted between February 3 and February 26, 2026, and achieved a response rate of 28.6% (n=1,166).

Participation in the survey was voluntary and confidential. Only CAUT researchers had access to the full set of responses and any data shared with UTFA was anonymized as necessary to protect respondents' identities.

Among the survey respondents, 83.6% were UTFA members, 14.6% were retired UTFA members, and 1.8% were UTFA federated members. The largest proportion of respondents were aged 45–54 (29.1%), followed by 35–44 (22.8%) and 55–64 (19.8%).



The largest proportion of respondents self-identified as women (41%, n=473), followed by those who did not self-identify as a member of a designated equity-deserving group (27%, n=320) and those who preferred not to say (15%, n=174). Smaller proportions identified as racialized (17%, n=204), LGBTQ+ (9%, n=110), persons with disabilities (8%, n=89), Indigenous (1%, n=15). Respondents could select all applicable categories, so that percentages add up to more than 100%.

Most respondents reported holding full-time appointments (68%). Over one-quarter identified as tenure-stream faculty (27%), and 14% reported continuing teaching-stream status. Smaller proportions

identified as librarians (8%), part-time appointees (7%), or holding contractually limited term appointments (4%). Respondents could select more than one category.

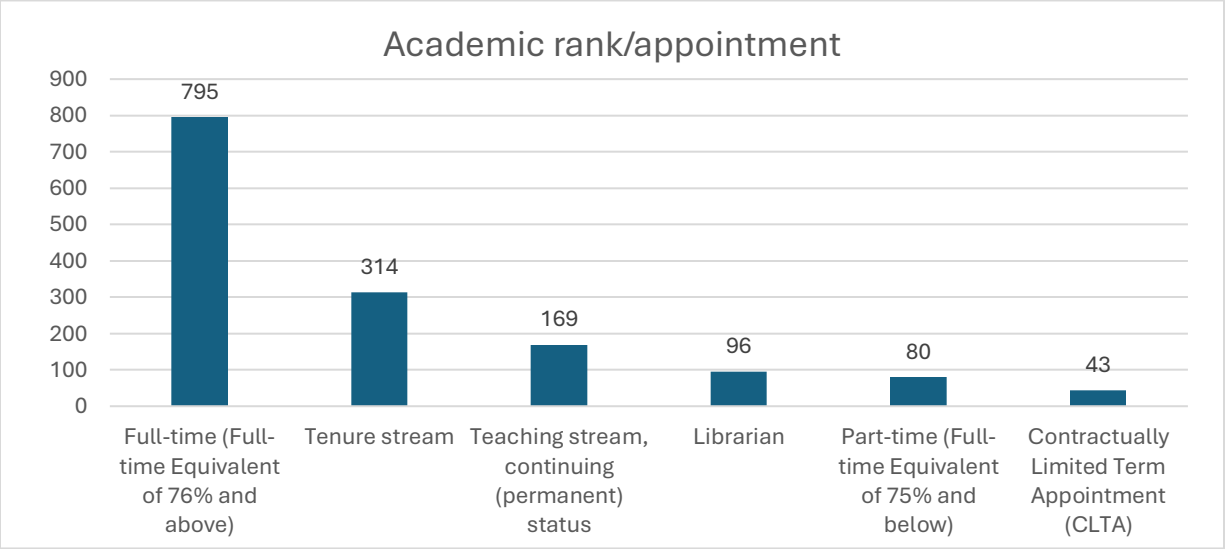


Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents by academic division or unit.

Table 1: Division/Academic Unit for primary appointment (i.e. 51% or more) (n=1,166)					
Category Name (division/unit/discipline)	**# responses to Q 14**	**%responses to Q 14 (n = 1166)**	**Members in the Category (incl. Actives, FEDs, Retirees)**	**Response rate within Category**	**Proportion of responses in Category as % of Total Membership (n = 4077)**
Did Not Answer the Question	35				
Applied Science and Engineering	108	9.30%	281	38%	7%
Architecture, Landscape and Design	18	1.50%	90	20%	2%
Arts and Science (UTSG): Humanities	133	11.40%	499	27%	12%
Arts and Science (UTSG): Sciences	90	7.70%	463	19%	11%
Arts and Science (UTSG): Social Sciences	108	9.30%	276	39%	7%
Dentistry	8	0.70%	83	10%	2%
Education (OISE)	69	5.90%	206	33%	5%
Federated Colleges	11	0.90%	69	16%	2%
Information	12	1.00%	51	24%	1%
Kinesiology and Physical Education	10	0.90%	46	22%	1%
Law	5	0.40%	44	11%	1%
Library	89	7.60%	209	43%	5%
Management (Rotman)	19	1.60%	142	13%	3%
Medicine	69	5.90%	283	24%	7%
Music	14	1.20%	68	21%	2%
Nursing	14	1.20%	49	29%	1%
Pharmacy	5	0.40%	57	9%	1%
Prefer not to say	50	4.30%	0	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Public Health	33	2.80%	101	33%	2%
Social Work	8	0.70%	37	22%	1%
UTM: Humanities	38	3.30%	145	26%	4%
UTM: Management	7	0.60%	42	17%	1%

UTM: Sciences	49	4.20%	164	30%	4%
UTM: Social Sciences	40	3.40%	162	25%	4%
UTSC: Humanities	28	2.40%	139	20%	3%
UTSC: Management	12	1.00%	63	19%	2%
UTSC: Sciences	33	2.80%	194	17%	5%
UTSC: Social Sciences	51	4.40%	114	45%	3%
Grand Total	1166	100.00%	4077	29%	100%

Survey Results

Q1: What do you believe are the three most important things the Association does? (No more than 3 choices may be selected)			
	Active member (n=996)	**Retired (n=170)**	**Total (n=1,166)**
Negotiating salaries, benefits, and working conditions	95.5%	95.3%	95.5%
Defending members' individual and collective rights, including through grievances and arbitration	77.1%	71.8%	76.3%
Protecting academic freedom	38.9%	48.2%	40.2%
Working with the University Administration on issues of shared concern	23.9%	27.6%	24.4%
Providing members with legal advice	25.2%	11.8%	23.2%
Advising members on career matters such as tenure and promotion	11.6%	17.1%	12.4%
Advocating for collegial governance	7.5%	5.3%	7.2%
Promoting equity and social justice	6.9%	6.5%	6.9%
Lobbying the provincial and federal governments	3.2%	3.5%	3.3%
Enforcing workplace health and safety rules	2.0%	0%	1.7%
Upholding professional ethics	1.0%	3.5%	1.4%
Other	2.4%	3.5%	2.4%
Don't know / no opinion	0.4%	0%	0.3%

Q1_2 From the activities you selected as the MOST important things the Association does, please rank the item(s) from 1 to 3.						
	Active Member (n=615)			**UTFA Retired (n=116)**		
	1	**2**	**3**	**1**	**2**	**3**
Negotiating salaries, benefits, and working conditions	71.7%	17.4%	5.7%	76.7%	13.8%	4.3%
Defending members' individual and collective rights	12.8%	38.5%	23.4%	9.5%	45.7%	16.4%
Protecting academic freedom	7.8%	15.1%	20.2%	11.2%	13.8%	23.3%
Working with the University Administration on issues of shared concern	2.6%	8.3%	12.8%	0.9%	11.2%	19.0%
Promoting equity and social justice	1.1%	2.3%	3.6%	2.6%	3.4%	0.9%
Providing members with legal advice	1.0%	6.3%	16.3%	0.0%	3.4%	9.5%
Advocating for collegial governance	0.5%	1.8%	4.9%	0.0%	1.7%	3.4%
Lobbying the provincial and federal governments	0.2%	1.3%	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.4%
Enforcing workplace health and safety rules	0.2%	0.5%	1.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Advising members on career matters such as tenure and promotion	0.2%	7.0%	5.2%	0.0%	3.4%	12.9%
Upholding professional ethics	0.0%	0.3%	0.5%	0.0%	1.7%	0.0%

2: What do you believe are the three least important things the Association does? (No more than 3 choices may be selected)			
	Active member (n=996)	**Retired (n=170)**	**Total (n= 1,166)**
Lobbying the provincial and federal governments	43.6%	50.6%	44.6%
Enforcing workplace health and safety rules	38.1%	35.3%	37.7%
Promoting equity and social justice	33.0%	33.5%	33.1%
Upholding professional ethics	30.4%	30.6%	30.4%
Advising members on career matters such as tenure and promotion	28.2%	20.6%	27.1%
Advocating for collegial governance	20.4%	32.4%	22.1%
Working with the University Administration on issues of shared concern	11.6%	12.4%	11.7%
Providing members with legal advice	7.1%	13.5%	8.1%
Protecting academic freedom	4.9%	0.6%	4.3%
External political activism / issues outside core faculty employment mandate	2.2%	2.9%	2.3%
Defending members' individual and collective rights, including through grievances and arbitration	2.0%	0.6%	1.8%
Negotiating salaries, benefits, and working conditions	1.7%	1.8%	1.7%
Other	1.9%	2.9%	2.1%
Don't know / no opinion	15.8%	12.4%	15.3%

Q2_2: From the activities you selected as the LEAST important things the Association does, please rank them 1 to 3.							
	Active member (n=570)			Retired (n=117)			Top 3 (n=687)
	1	2	3	1	2	3	
Lobbying the provincial and federal governments)	22.6%	20.5%	13.5%	28.2%	15.4%	15.4%	57.1%
Promoting equity and social justice	23.5%	9.8%	9.3%	20.5%	13.7%	6.8%	42.4%
Enforcing workplace health and safety rules	14.6%	14.6%	13.5%	12.0%	9.4%	13.7%	41.3%
Upholding professional ethics	8.9%	15.4%	15.1%	8.5%	17.1%	11.1%	39.0%
Advising members on career matters such as tenure and promotion	11.4%	11.1%	12.1%	5.1%	5.1%	12.0%	32.5%
Advocating for collegial governance	8.1%	10.4%	7.7%	12.0%	15.4%	12.8%	28.5%
Working with the University Administration on issues of shared concern)	2.8%	6.1%	6.3%	2.6%	6.0%	5.1%	15.0%
Providing members with legal advice	2.5%	3.5%	4.0%	3.4%	5.1%	2.6%	10.2%
Protecting academic freedom	0.7%	3.3%	1.9%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%	5.1%
Defending members' individual and collective rights	0.5%	0.7%	0.9%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%	1.9%
Negotiating salaries, benefits, and working conditions	0.9%	0.2%	0.2%	1.7%	0.9%	0.0%	1.5%

Q3: How satisfied are you with the Association?			
	Active Member (n=996)	**Retired Member (n=170)**	**Total (n=1,166)**
Very satisfied	21.1%	35.9%	23.2%
Satisfied	46.5%	45.5%	46.4%
Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	15.6%	10.0%	14.8%
Unsatisfied	9.4%	3.5%	8.6%
Very unsatisfied	6.2%	4.1%	5.9%
Don't know / no opinion	1.2%	0.6%	1.1%

Q4: In what ways do you regularly learn about, or participate in, the Association's activities? (Choose all that apply)			
	Active member (n=996)	**Retired (n=170)**	**Total (n=1,166)**
E-blasts (e.g., email bargaining updates, announcements)	93.9%	91.8%	93.6%
Meetings (e.g. bargaining town halls, Annual General Meeting, committee meetings, council, constituency meetings, UTFA workshops, etc.)	36.4%	33.5%	36.0%
Your constituency representative's monthly or bi-monthly Council updates	30.3%	25.9%	29.7%
Association's annual report (AGM Newsletter)	20.1%	28.8%	21.4%

Website	21.1%	18.2%	20.7%
Emailing the Association at faculty@utfa.org or advice@utfa.org	17.1%	9.4%	16.0%
Social Media	1.6%	1.2%	1.5%
Other	2.0%	4.7%	2.4%
Prefer not to answer	0.8%	2.4%	1.0%

Q5: How would you prefer the Association communicate with you?			
	Active member (n=996)	**Retired (n=170)**	**Total (n=1,166)**
E-blasts (e.g., email bargaining updates, announcements)	92.7%	92.9%	92.7%
Meetings	40.9%	34.7%	40.0%
Your constituency representative's monthly or bi-monthly Council updates	37.7%	38.2%	37.7%
Website	25.8%	22.9%	25.4%
Association's annual report (AGM Newsletter)	22.6%	26.5%	23.2%
Text messages	3.4%	7.1%	3.9%
Social media	3.7%	1.8%	3.4%
Other	1.8%	3.5%	2.1%
Prefer not to answer	1.0%	1.2%	1.0%

Q6: How well-informed would you say you are about the Association's activities, events, and initiatives?			
	Active member (n=992)	**Retired (n=169)**	**Total (n=1,161)**
Very well informed	15.9%	14.2%	15.2%
Somewhat informed	67.4%	71.0%	68.0%
Neither informed nor not informed	8.1%	7.7%	8.0%
Somewhat uninformed	6.0%	4.7%	5.9%
Not well informed	2.5%	2.4%	2.5%

Q7: Thinking about the next five years, what do you believe should be the top priorities for UTFA?			
	Active Member (n=764)	**Retired (n=120)**	**Total (n=884)**
Salary, benefits & working conditions (including suggestion for inflation/cost of living increases, timeliness / bargaining delays, competitiveness)	45.3%	32.5%	43.6%
Unionization/ certification	13.7%	4.2%	12.4%
Workload	12.2%	3.3%	11.0%
Equity & parity (including CAS, CLTA, teaching stream, librarian, gender, new faculty, retirees-not just about salary)	11.6%	10.0%	11.4%
Academic freedom	11.5%	11.7%	11.5%
Collegial governance (including non-combative/less adversarial work with admin)	6.5%	4.2%	6.2%

Pension (including indexing, inflation, divestment issues)	4.7%	10.0%	5.4%
UTFA services and member support (legal, grievance, career support, accommodation - positive and negative comments)	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%
Benefits (health, dental, dependents, parental leave)	3.1%	11.7%	4.3%
Faculty housing benefit	5.0%	0.0%	4.3%
Activism/social justice/ political issues (positive and negative)	3.0%	3.3%	3.1%
Job security / precarity	3.0%	1.7%	2.8%
Governance / internal admin of UTFA	2.9%	4.2%	3.1%
Artificial Intelligence	1.4%	1.7%	1.5%
Government funding/Lobbying	1.3%	1.7%	1.4%
Opposition to unionization	1.0%	0.0%	0.9%
Other	4.3%	7.5%	4.8%

Q8: Do you have any suggestions for how the Association could be more effective for you?			
	Active member (n=474)	**Retired (n=48)**	**Total (n=522)**
Reduce political advocacy / social justice/ EDI	16.0%	8.3%	15.3%
Focus on core mandate/faculty issues (salary, benefits, working conditions, academic freedom, bargaining and negotiation effectiveness)	14.6%	16.7%	14.8%
Improve communication (such as shorter emails, more surveys, more tailored messages, better website)	13.9%	12.5%	13.8%

Concerns with representation of different member groups (Teaching stream, librarian, early career, retiree, faculty/unit differences)	10.5%	31.3%	12.5%
Support unionization	11.4%	4.2%	10.7%
More direct engagement (including at the unit level)	8.2%	8.3%	8.2%
Improve services and member support (legal, grievance, resources, career support, accommodation)	7.8%	8.3%	7.9%
Governance reform	8.0%	2.1%	7.5%
Improve relationship with administration (be less adversarial)	4.3%	2.1%	4.0%
Oppose unionization	1.1%	0.0%	1.0%
Other	4.0%	6.3%	4.2%

Q9: If there was one thing you could change about how the Association is run, what would it be?	**Total (n=434)**
Reduce advocacy on political and social justice matters	18.9%
Unionize / certify	14.3%
Governance reform (reform Council, elect more Executive committee members, empower the membership)	11.5%
Improve representation and inclusion	8.8%
Improve relationship with administration / less antagonistic	8.1%
Focus on core employment issues	7.4%
Better communication with members	6.7%
Build organizational capacity and support	5.1%

Improve transparency and accountability	4.8%
More democracy and member participation	4.4%
More member engagement and participation	3.9%
Improve meeting processes and decision procedures	3.0%
Don’t unionize / certify	2.1%
Other	6.2%

Appendix 2: UTFA's Mission Statements

UTFA Constitution Article II - Purpose

2.1 The purpose of the Association is to promote the welfare of the current and retired faculty, librarians, and research associates of the University of Toronto, the University of St. Michael's College, the University of Trinity College, and Victoria University, and generally to advance the interests of teachers, researchers and librarians in Canadian universities.

Annual Newsletter: Who We Are and What We Do

UTFA is the only democratically accountable, collective body representative of faculty and librarians at the University of Toronto. Elected leaders of our Association represent and advance members' interests and negotiate and enforce workplace standards on behalf of the membership via bargaining, grievances, and other forms of advocacy. As a bargaining agent for faculty members and academic librarians, UTFA engages in extensive consultations, obtains a bargaining mandate at UTFA Council, and negotiates salary, benefits, workload, and policy improvements with the senior University Administration on your behalf.

The efforts of elected Negotiating Teams meaningfully impact working conditions, compensation, pensions, and benefits. UTFA's political leadership and staff also advise and assist individual members and groups with concerns about University policies and procedures, as well as with enforcing the rights or protections they may have under the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA), and prevailing legislation.

The Association also advocates for issues that affect members in the workplace, including academic freedom and collegial governance; human rights; fair and equitable workloads; job security; pay equity; academic integrity; procedural fairness; health and safety; appointments and promotions; compensation; workplace accommodation; and post-retirement benefits. This advocacy is evident throughout this Report.

UTFA Website: Mission

UTFA's purpose is to promote the welfare of the current and retired faculty and librarians of the University of Toronto, the University of St Michael's College, the University of Trinity College, and Victoria University, and generally to advance the interests of teachers, researchers and librarians in Canadian universities.

UTFA's 'mission' is much broader than its purpose. While UTFA's formal and legal bargaining rights apply only to matters of compensation, and since 2010 to workload, that hasn't stopped the Association from

every effort to ensure faculty and librarians are heard and involved in all matters relating to the conditions under which they do their research and teaching.

Expanding UTFA's voice and capacity is one of our key pursuits in the Special Joint Advisory Committee (SJAC) deliberations currently underway. The SJAC was agreed to in the 2011 round of negotiations with the administration and is charged with examining the current Memorandum of Agreement, as well as more specific issues such as appointments and tenure policies.

A key part of UTFA's mission is to be an effective actor in the public sphere, whether it's on issues relating to post-secondary education, or on broader public policy debates that matter to our members. For example, we've added our voice to those who are alarmed by the implications of federal government decisions on research funding, and the apparent muzzling of federal research scientists, many of whom collaborate with university colleagues. UTFA makes its voice heard where it matters.