

**York University Faculty Association
Annual Trustees' Report
2013-14**

Submitted by

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In keeping with Article 3.5 of the YUFA Constitution, two trustees are elected at the Annual General Membership Meeting. They are responsible for reviewing policies and activities within YUFA over the past academic year. They are also able to make recommendations for policy review or change in activity.

In preparation for the writing of this report, we examined the past year's minutes of Executive Council, Stewards' Council, as well as those of the Annual Membership Meeting and General Membership Meetings. We also examined the Financial Report from the 2012-13 auditors.

It is our view that YUFA has fulfilled its obligations to its membership in giving close attention to all significant issues affecting its membership and the broader community. We identified the following principal issues that have been considered or addressed over the past year: **Pension Reform, Constitutional Reform, the Alternate Stream, Prioritization, Equity, and Release Time**. Other matters of concern that we have identified are improved **Communications within YUFA** and attendance at **Membership Meetings**. Lastly, we have reviewed YUFA's **Financial Affairs**.

1. Pension Reform

Two informational meetings were organized in October to address the issue of pension reform. The York University Pension Group that represented all bargaining units of the university arrived at a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) concerning pension reform. This agreement was intended to allow the university to enter Phase 2 of the solvency relief process initiated by the provincial government regarding public sector pensions. The MOA stipulated continuation of the current hybrid pension plan with no reduction of benefits and with an increase in contribution rates of 50%. The contribution increase would be phased in over a two-year period to bring about a 5.1% savings. This would allow the university to

gain eligibility for solvency relief and a lengthening of the period over which special payments to address the pension plan deficit need to be made. The membership approved the MOA with 76% of voting members in favour.

2. Constitutional Vote and Governance Structure

A number of proposals to change and/or clarify some matters of procedure and voting in the YUFA constitution were defeated in a recent membership ballot. This followed two years of debate about the YUFA constitution and the relationship between Stewards' Council and Executive. Fortunately, Stewards' Council and Executive have worked constructively and cooperatively over the past year or two. In our review of the minutes we found one occasion upon which there was disagreement about how Executive would implement an SC motion to form a subcommittee, but in this case members of the two bodies consulted and developed a solution. The Executive and Stewards' Council have been discussing matters of election procedure, the use of membership lists during elections and the role of the returning officer, each of which may require changes to policy on YUFA's governance documents.

3. Alternate Stream and Unit Workload Documents

The newly expanded Alternate Stream was raised as an issue in last year's Trustees' Report. This matter is a continuing concern for YUFA. In units that did not previously have an alternate stream, the administration has proposed a 3.5 FCE. The YUFA caucus of JCOAA was mandated by the Executive to explore the implications of this teaching workload. The YUFA caucus of JCOAA maintains the view that 3.0 FCE is an appropriate teaching load for the alternate stream, and YUFA has encouraged all units to insist on a 3.0 workload. This matter needs attention, since there is concern that acceptance by units of a 3.5 FCE for an alternate stream position could establish an existing practice that becomes applicable to all units or enshrined in unit teaching load documents. Whatever the appropriate teaching load for alternate stream turns out to be, we are concerned that the employer appears to be using unit-level agreements on workload to circumvent bargaining itself, and that YUFA has no strategy to prevent this.

We would point out that unit teaching load documents have long been used to establish teaching load norms, which have often varied across departments. Moreover, discussions at Stewards' Council and JCOAA have revealed that the parties (and especially the employer) have been slow to update unit teaching-load documents, with many being more than 12 years out of date. YUFA should consider whether the current model of regulating workload almost exclusively through unit

teaching-load documents – ultimately approved through JCOAA - needs to be changed in favour of establishing more specific maximum teaching-load norms for both the professorial and alternate streams in the collective agreement.

4. Prioritization

A prioritization exercise has been initiated by the administration. A “collegially determined” task force is in the process of being set up to examine possible departmental and programme efficiencies. This exercise has the potential to redefine the university in significant ways. A group of concerned YUFA senators was set up to decide appropriate criteria and construct an academic template before any data were collected. The Provost has agreed to bring all documents developed by this sub-group to Senate for discussion and consultation. YUFA has established its own Task Force on Strategic Vision. It has also been suggested that YUFA engage the services of a forensic accountant to explore issues of financial need surrounding prioritization. The Senate’s role in academic decision-making is protected by the Collective Agreement. Apart from monitoring any potential violation of the Collective Agreement, YUFA’s role in this exercise needs to be explored, particularly as it applies to education of its membership within bodies such as faculty councils, departments/programmes and open fora.

5. Equity

YUFA has continued to play a leading role at York in promoting equity and affirmative action in hiring. A Stewards’ Council motion instructing Executive to demand a welcoming policy for members of the LGBT community in job ads for YUFA members recently led to employer agreement at JCOAA.

6. Release Time

There is a long-standing problem of banked release time for officer and committee service. This accumulated liability must be budgeted in whole as an expense on an annual basis. We recommend that the Executive consider introducing a by-law requiring banked release time to be used within a certain number of years or else be paid out as a stipend. The policy introduced three years ago of requiring officers to use release time in the year when it was earned (unless this proves impractical for one’s department in the first year of an officer’s term) should be followed. This policy is currently under consideration as a proposed by-law.

Other Matters and Recommendations

1. Communications

Unlike most faculty associations, YUFA does not have a regular bulletin, newsletter or digest sent to members. Instead, we rely on web site postings and intermittent email announcements that are brief and merely informational in nature. For example, the minutes of meetings of the JCOAA are posted on the YUFA web site and they provide a record of some of the key issues that have arisen between YUFA and the employer since the conclusion of the last round of bargaining. But there is very little effort to try to articulate analysis or commentary of those issues, or even to place them before the membership in an active way. The new web forums bring more participatory and interactive communications to the YUFA web site, but the association may also benefit from an official communication of news and perspective developed by YUFA as an organization. We recommend that the Communications Officer's proposal to start a regular html-formatted newsletter sent to members by email be given consideration.

2. Membership Meetings

One challenge we face is attracting enough members to attend membership meetings, especially information meetings taking place in advance of electronic votes on important issues. The two meetings on the pension plan changes and the two meetings on the constitutional amendments were poorly attended and achieved quorum in only one of those four instances. The level of participation in the electronic votes was not very high: 30% in the case of the pension vote and only 40% in the case of the vote on constitutional changes. One can assume that the technical nature of the issues or the complexity of the voting process itself may explain the relatively low turnout in contrast to the relatively high levels of participation in Executive elections.

Financial Statements and Auditors' Report

This year's auditors' report and financial statements reveal that YUFA officers – especially the Treasurer and President - have responsibly managed YUFA's financial affairs. Contributions have been made to the defense and arbitrations funds as required by the Association's governance documents. Despite heavy expenses arising from pension consulting and staff departures the Association has almost achieved a balanced budget. While YUFA has hired a lawyer and actuary to assist with solvency relief negotiations, other unions participating in the York University Pension Group (YUPG) have agreed to make a financial contribution.