

Dear SFUFA Members:

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President's Welcome

Dear Colleagues

What? It's September already? The summer months have gone by too fast!

Welcome back, everyone, and I hope you had a good break before the start of a new academic year. A special welcome to all new faculty. We wish you the best in your career here at SFU, as you settle into a new place and home, new routines, and new colleagues.

It has been yet another busy for our Association in terms of the workload for our Staff, and the seriousness of the issues we faced as a collective on a variety of fronts. In terms of our relationship with administration, we have seen progress in some areas of faculty relations, yet we also saw a rise in cases relating to individual members, in the number of grievances, and matters taken to arbitration. We will continue to engage in our preferred way of working, which is to collaborate with all groups in coming to creative and effective solutions to issues that arise. We seek to build strong relationships that can withstand disagreement and still maintain the personal connection.

As we look forward to a new academic year, we continue to work towards ensuring that this is a good workplace, in spite of the challenges, such as budget cuts and increasing workloads. It seems that we have barely seen the ink dry on the last Collective Agreement when it is time to prepare for the next round of bargaining. As usual, we will be seeking your

input and views on what you believe to be important through our bargaining survey and in-person socials. We are committed to maintaining regular communication with you via this bulletin and hope to revive our meetings with Department Liaisons and the Chairs and Directors Network (see information below to sign up). We will post new dates soon. Collegial governance has been a matter of concern for many of you, and while your Executive has this issue as a key priority, we rely on you to bring such matters to our attention. We encourage you to sustain the practices of collegial governance by taking up service roles in your units, on university committees and Senate. It is our collective efforts on many fronts that will keep our workplace functioning well.

Reflecting on the origins of Labour Day, it is a Canadian union, the Toronto Typographical Union, that started the “Nine Hour Movement” demanding a shorter work-day, a movement that ended with a strike in 1872. Following the strike, there was pressure to declare a national labour holiday, which was achieved finally in 1894. The legacy of the Toronto printers must be remembered as giving us more than just a long weekend - labour rights and justice are hard fought, and we must be vigilant in upholding them.

I thank you all for the confidence and trust you have placed in our Executive, and for your interest and ongoing participation in the affairs of the Association. We would not be what we are today without the dedication, expertise and unparalleled commitment and work ethic of our Executive Director, Brian Green, Member Services Officer Jennifer Scott, and Executive Assistant Melanie Lam.

We extend special thanks to Mike Sjoerdsma, two-time president of SFUFA and until recently our Vice President, who has stepped down to take up an Associate Dean position. Mike has been a core member of our team for many years, from before we unionized. He saw us through the pandemic, the round of bargaining that brought us a new pension plan, changes in SFU leadership and more. We wish him the best in his new role.

Feel free to write or call any of us with questions, concerns, requests or simply to chat. We look forward to seeing many of you at one of our socials this semester.

Have a great semester and year ahead!

Kumari Beck, President

SFUFA Executive, 2024-2025

SFUFA's elected Executive members for 2025 begin their terms on September 1st, and includes:

Kumari Beck, Education (President)

Bertille Antoine, Economics (Acting Vice President)

Ronda Arab, English (Director)

Tim Beichslag, Health Sciences (Director, Community Engagement)

Adena Brons, Library (Director, Librarians and Archivists)

Michael Hathaway, Sociology and Anthropology (Director)

Tamara O'Doherty, Criminology (Director, Teaching Appointments)

Janice Regan, Computing Science (Director)

Ljiljana Trajkovic (Engineering Science)

Claudia Wei Wah Wong, Linguistics (Director, Human Rights and Equity)

Former Vice President Mike Sjoerdsma has left the Executive to take up a position as Associate Dean in the Faculty of Applied Sciences. Members who have completed their terms and did not stand for re-election are: Lyn Bartram (SIAT), Rochelle Tucker (Health Sciences), and David Broun (Physics), who remains the Association's Chief Negotiator.

Thanks to all outgoing members for their service to the Association and the community, and welcome to all new members who are joining us this year.

AGM Member Motions

Two member motions – one regarding Israel/ Palestine and the other regarding arms divestment – were both passed in an electronic vote following the AGM. The first motion urged the administration of SFU to make a number of commitments, including to suspend institutional partnerships with Israeli academic institutions, divest from Israeli commercial interests, and provide concrete support to Palestinian scholars and students. The second motion urged the administration to divest from companies involved in arms production and to embed that commitment in SFU's Responsible Investment Policy (Policy B10.16).

SFU President Joy Johnson responded to our communication regarding the motions shortly after our last bulletin was sent out, and we reproduce the response in full here.

June 26, 2024

Dear Kumari,

Thank you for sharing these motions with SFU administration on behalf of SFUFA. The Israel-Hamas war continues to distress all of us. We know that many members of our community care deeply about this issue and our collective response to it and are looking for ways to make a meaningful difference. We appreciate the chance to respond.

Motion to divest from corporations engaged in military arms production

This SFUFA motion is aligned with some petitions received from members of our community requesting divestment from companies producing military arms and related technologies.

As shared in a recent message to the SFU community, the Board has had robust conversations about investment decision-making, including at their recent May 23 meeting. They acknowledge that SFU needs to make investment decisions that are aligned with the academic mission, the University Act and SFU's values. Accordingly, the Board has asked the Finance, Investments and Property Committee to review the policy and provide recommendations to the Board.

The review process will contain a plan for community consultation and will also seek advice from experts. The Board has instructed that this review take place over the coming months and allow for a consultative and transparent process.

The community will be invited to participate in this important conversation within the coming weeks. We will ensure that this motion is included in the consultation as representative of SFUFA's position on this topic.

Motion on Israel/Palestine

SFU is governed by provincial legislation under the University Act. This act establishes the legal framework, governance model and degree-granting authority for public universities in British Columbia. Under section 66(1) of the act, the University must be non-sectarian and nonpolitical in principle.

Institutional partnerships are governed by the Senate through the Senate Committee on International Affairs and guided by the University Policy on International Activities (GP 23).

As laid out in GP 23, Senate is responsible for ensuring the required conditions for any international activity are met. Senate is also responsible for guiding decisions around partnership suspensions, enhancements or new developments. All faculty members have the right to academic freedom as embedded within the SFUFA collective agreement, and the university will not infringe upon the right of individual faculty members to pursue research collaborations with partners of their choice.

As stated above, the Board has had robust conversations about investment decision-making, including at their recent May 23 meeting and have released a message to the community regarding next steps in the review of SFU's Responsible Investment Policy. Details of this are contained in our response to the first motion above.

SFU has robust Refugee and Newcomer programs that create a welcoming and inclusive university for the refugee community and actively respond to the global refugee crisis. SFU has a multipronged approach to engaging with refugee communities, including through research, scholarships and support services for prospective and current refugee students. These programs include a wide range of partnerships that continue to research new ways of supporting the refugee community within Canada and globally.

Since October, our Student Services and Multifaith Centre leadership and staff have been providing culturally appropriate faith-based supports to those affected by the war. Campus Public Safety also has strong relationships with student groups, faculty and staff, and has been in touch with the Muslim and Arabic student associations to support them, with the goal of ensuring safety. To date, members of the Crisis Management Team (CMT) and SFU's executive team have met with faculty and staff groups, student associations and the National Council for Canadian Muslims in order to receive feedback on how we can better support our community.

We appreciate the opportunity to have continued dialogue with SFUFA about how the university can support faculty and the university community during this difficult time, within the bounds of SFU's legal duties and aligned with our academic mission.

Sincerely,

Joy Johnson

President & Vice-Chancellor Simon Fraser University

The Executive does not generally meet in July and August, and so will be considering this response at its next meeting.

Related to the above, members may have seen news coverage of a legal action brought against the Association in response to these motions. A group of 13 faculty members has asked the courts to overturn the motions on the grounds that they are contrary to SFUFA's Constitution and By-Laws as governed by the *Societies Act*. We are working with legal counsel to defend against this action, fully confident that the Association has acted in accordance with its Constitution and By-Laws.

Finally, regarding the breach of our first electronic vote, which had to be re-done after it was hacked, we have no further information at this time. IT has completed its investigation and their report has been sent to SFU's human resources divisions and general counsel for

review. What if any further action may be undertaken is unclear at this time.

Health Spending Account

In the last round of collective bargaining, we were able to negotiate for members a Health Spending Account of \$1300 per year. This is designed to provide members improved access to benefits in a way that is flexible to meet a wide range of member needs. It has taken some time to see the HSA implemented, but it is now available, as of September 1. In recognition of the delayed implementation, this year's entitlement will be doubled to \$2600.

The HSA is generally applicable to any item or service allowable as a medical benefit for purposes of income tax or any deductible or benefit over and above the existing coverage in our Extended Health package. That is, whether related to eye- care, dental expenses, physiotherapy or any other benefit, the HSA will reimburse costs higher than currently covered. Amounts unused in one calendar year will carry over for an additional year. Claims for a given calendar year must be submitted no later than 90 days into the following year.

SFU's communications regarding the HSA have suggested that counseling services are not covered. We do not agree with this assessment and have been working with benefits specialists to investigate this further. Members who do have counseling expenses that would meet the normal eligibility under our benefits plan are encouraged to submit for HSA reimbursement regardless of SFU's stated restriction; should those claims be accepted or denied by Pacific Blue Cross, please do let us know as we continue to work on this.

To access the HSA, members can access the [member portal](#) or use PBC's [mobile app](#).

Information on HSA's generally can be found [here](#).

Collective Bargaining

Our current Collective Agreement with SFU expires on June 30, 2025. We will then, begin preparations for bargaining this Fall, with member consultation expected to begin early in 2025.

We encourage members to begin thinking of what priorities you and your colleagues have for collective bargaining, to share these with us, and to let us know if you have any questions about the negotiations process.

Our bargaining team for this round has not been assembled, but we are pleased to once again be led by Chief Negotiator David Broun.

Health and Safety Reps Needed

The following Health and Safety Committees need faculty representatives:

AQ/Strand Hall
South East Campus (ASB, TASC 1, Disc 1 & 2)
West Administrative Unit (MBC, WMC, TC)

The meeting schedule is as follows:

- AQ/SH safety committee: last Tuesday of the month at 3-4pm
- South East Campus safety committee: third Tuesday of the month at 2-3pm
- West Administrative Unit safety committee: second Thursday of the month at 1:30-2:30pm

If you are interested in sitting on any of these committees as the SFUFA rep, please contact Membership Services Officer, Jennifer Scott, at jascott@sfu.ca.

SFUFA Equity Committee Survey

The SFUFA Equity Committee has been conducting a survey designed to gather insights into the experiences and challenges faced by SFU faculty members concerning workload and equity issues. The survey is still up and running, but will be closed on ----

Your participation offers an opportunity to share your experiences and contribute to a comprehensive understanding of these issues, ensuring that diverse perspectives are represented. The feedback gathered will help identify areas for improvement, fostering a more equitable and supportive working environment at SFU. We hope you will take a few moments to complete the survey; as this is an initiative of the Equity Committee, any questions or concerns should be sent to outgoing Chair Ljiljana Trajkovic (ljilja@sfu.ca) and/ or incoming Chair Claudia Wei Wah Wong (wei_wah_wong@sfu.ca).

Departmental Contacts and Chairs and Directors Network

As we begin a new academic year, a reminder that SFUFA maintains a list of members who volunteer to meet periodically to share information from their Departments and to discuss issues of broader interest with colleagues across the University. The group is open to all, and interested members can contact Executive Director Brian Green at bsgreen@sfu.ca

A separate network for Chairs and Directors is maintained by SFUFA President Kumari Beck, and provides an opportunity not only for Chairs to hear directly about major issues on the SFUFA radar, but also to bring forward their own concerns as academic administrators and to share these with others who play a similar role. Chairs who are interested in participating should contact Kumari at kumari_beck@sfu.ca

Reminder – Alternate Contacts

Given periodic disruption of SFU's internet and email systems, the Association is collecting alternate contacts (email or phone) for members, to be used only in the event that we need to reach you during a time that the University's communications systems are not functioning. Members can send alternate email addresses and/ or phone numbers to SFUFA Executive Director, Brian Green, at bsgreen@sfu.ca