President’s Report

Thoughts on Bargaining and Public Sector Compensation

My last note to the council made the point that we will be bargaining in an environment dominated by a provincial government commitment to austerity. I provided examples from the Ministry of Education to drive home that point. A recent article by Murray Mandrake (SaskPower’s rising salaries make 3.5 per cent wage cut unlikely) uses salary information from Crown Investment Corporation to suggest this austerity program is doomed.

In that same note to council I questioned the focus on providing budget information to the University community. I made the point that budgets are planning documents and it appears uRegina develops a surplus operating budget planning to move surplus operating funds to support special projects and capital projects.

Thoughts on Hiring

The Grievance Committee flagged this issue. APT hiring has become term hiring. New hires are often brought in on short-term contracts. This allows hiring without the need for a full search and all of the normal processes associated with searches. Those new hires join the existing term employees in the ever-increasing precarious workforce pool. Term hiring is not just for APT members. We see an increase in academic term faculty positions and an increase in management’s request to convert term positions into regular faculty positions.

Thoughts of Collegial Governance

We need to protect the collegial role of our members by understanding basic processes for decision-making. During a recent out-of-scope review it was suggested that several members of the committee were in conflict of interest and their voice should not be heard. When they asked for advice on process I turned to David Robinson, Executive Director of CAUT for advice.

Dr. Robinson wrote, ..."As to the issue of conflict of interest, I would emphasize that simply having an opinion about someone is not a conflict of interest. Actual conflicts of interest in a review process arise where there is a family or other close personal relationship with a candidate, where there is some financial gain to be had (such as a financial relationship with the candidate), or where there has been significant conflict or collaboration between reviewers and the candidate. To meet the test of a fair process, those who make recommendations about an individual must be competent to judge the professional fitness of the candidate, assess all the evidence on the basis of its merits, and have not made up their minds about the candidate in advance of the deliberation process. It seems to be the latter that the admin is hanging its case..."
on, but the onus is on them to demonstrate that this was indeed the fact – i.e. that the Dean was not given a fair hearing because minds were already made up. It is important to underline that if individuals expressed criticism of the Dean before the review, this in itself is not evidence of a conflict of interest. It is only in cases where disagreements rise above the bar of a “significant conflict” that a conflict of interest may arise. “

Faculty are in a unique position. They are the most competent to judge the professional fitness of the candidate and the most susceptible to unfounded charges of conflict of interest. Know your rights.

**Thoughts on Time**

URFA needs to find ways resolve workplace issues in a timely manner. A workplace incident occurs followed by a two-year investigation and the outcome is ... so far removed from the initial incident that no one is happy. A workplace incident occurs, there is a discussion and then the issue is left to simmer for two-years. No one is happy.

Time is not on our member’s side. A harassment investigation may take a year to investigate and it may take several years to grieve and resolve. Administration and some of our own committees fail to apply principles of natural justice leading to frustration, delays, confrontation and arbitrations. Time is wasted and careers are damaged.

Dennis Fitzpatrick
President URFA
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