

Report of the Data Committee

Submitted: May 2024

By: Data Committee

Background

Following the 2022 Annual General Meeting and at the request of the membership (per a motion at the 2022 AGM), the Faculty Association convened an ad hoc committee¹ to review the organization's data sharing practices and examine ways of increasing transparency concerning the following 5 elements:

1. The number of members who contact the UBC FA annually;
2. The number of members who are assisted by the UBC FA;
3. The nature of concerns related to employment or performance (e.g. tenure, teaching, leave, salary, general advice on policies and the Collective Agreement; specific advice relating to a workplace conflict; specific advice relating to a potential violation of the Collective Agreement);
4. Nature of concerns related to equity (e.g. racism, ableism, academic freedom, inequitable distribution of work, specific advice relating to a potential violation of the Collective Agreement or human rights law, or other issues); and
5. Outcomes of assistance provided (e.g. representation in a grievance; representation during a disciplinary meeting; representation during an investigation; representation in arbitration).

The Committee was also tasked with considering the implementation of a "yearly equity audit that includes a survey to all members who sought assistance and review of the membership of the UBC FA executive and committees."

The Committee met over the course of two years to review the data reporting changes already made by the FA, which were facilitated by the adoption of new data management software, and to consider what additional steps should be taken in light of the requests above.

Results

Thanks to the implementation of CAUT's Mobilis data management system, as of 2022 the Faculty Association was able to produce detailed accounting of cases as well as the results of representation. Since that time, the FA has provided annual reports to the membership of the following:

1. Number of members who contacted the FA that year;
2. The nature of the concerns raised by the membership;
3. The nature of concerns investigated by the University, with a breakdown of the category of equity concerns; and
4. The outcome of assistance (e.g. consult, grievance, arbitration, file open/closed) (note: representation in disciplinary meetings is evident by the number of Discipline cases listed in the overall summary).

¹ The Data Committee is composed of the following individuals: appointed by the signatories to the motion: Bruce Rusk, Michael Pidwirny, Kalina Christoff, & Uma Kumar; members at large: Mark MacLean & Glen Coulthard; appointed by the Executive Committee: Elisa Baniassad, Bronwen Sprout; UBCFA staff support: Deena Rubuliak (ex-officio).

The Committee believes that the above meets the majority of the requests for additional information listed in the motion.

In considering the request for summary data regarding “specific advice” (per fourth request of the motion), Committee members reviewed the type of disclosure provided by other Canadian Faculty Associations and found that a significant minority provided the level of detail suggested in the motion, while the majority provided no data at all. Those that provided grievance summaries were small associations, with limited membership and dramatically lower caseloads than the UBC FA (around 15-20 per year). The summaries provided were also relatively cursory, akin to newsletter reporting. Specific advice provided to individual members, FA strategy, and other highly sensitive and private information was not disclosed.

In considering whether to recommend that the UBC FA release more data, the Committee determined the risks to member privacy and the potential interference in the FA’s labour relations staff’s representation to outweigh any benefit of disclosing strategic advice in terms of possible improvements in the protection of member’s rights. Moreover, with over 500 cases annually, providing this level of detail would not be feasible for the current staff complement.

Recommendations

While reporting on every case would be impossible and unadvisable, the Committee recommends that the UBC FA’s Communications Committee consider developing member notices to educate the faculty on their rights in the workplace. Subject matter for these posts could be taken from recent cases (anonymized to preserve confidentiality) with outcomes that affect a swath of the membership.

After discussion and review of the practices of other Canadian FAs, the Committee recommends against a yearly equity audit of members who sought assistance. No such practice exists at any other FAs. Such an audit would require the FA labour relations staff to collect personal information from members regarding their protected characteristics regardless of whether those characteristics factored into the concern raised. The Committee was concerned that doing so could create a barrier to equity seeking and more vulnerable members, such as sessional lecturers, by increasing the level of unnecessary disclosure.

The Faculty Association Executive and its Committees have become more diverse over the years as membership has expanded, and the recent creation of the Anti-Racism and Indigeneity Committee and of the Equity Committee has extended new and dedicated spaces for equity deserving members. Nevertheless, there is always more that can be done to ensure all voices have influence. Therefore, the Committee believes that bolstering EDI practices within the FA is an important next step to ensure that representational structures reflect our diverse membership. The Committee recommends that the FA revise its Constitution & Bylaws to include specific language for the Nominations Committee and Chairs to consider EDI principles in all recruitment practices.

Finally, the Committee recommends that the FA continue its practice of providing annual reports to the membership regarding the number of members who contacted the FA, the nature of their concerns, the nature of concerns investigated by the University with a breakdown of the category of equity concerns; and the outcome of assistance provided (e.g. consult, grievance, arbitration, file open/closed).