PDFA Executive Council Meeting
October 17, 2024
Teleconference Meeting

Present: Abdullah Mohiuddin, President
MD Shaheen, VP Internal
Alsayed Mostafa, VP External
Razieh Firouzihaji, VP Operations
Simran Kaur, VP Finance
Ayesha Iqbal, VP Communications
Henry Prown, Member at Large
Michael Baggaley, PDFA Member
Sarita Bassil, PDFA Member

Staff: Samantha Spurrier, Executive Assistant
Scott Harris, Communications
Joy Correia, Director of Operations
Terry Sway, Labour Relations Officer

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 11:03am.

2. Land Acknowledgment

The President acknowledged that the PDFA is in Treaty 6 territory.

3. Approval of Agenda

MOTION:	To approve the agenda for October 17, 2024 Shaheen/Razieh	**CARRIED**

4. Approval of Minutes

MOTION:	To approve the minutes for September 19, 2024 Simran/Henry	**CARRIED**

5. New Member at Large

Michael Baggaley introduced himself.

MOTION:	To appoint Michael Baggaley as a Member at Large. Shaheen/Alsayed	**CARRIED**

6. Returning Member at Large

MOTION:	To appoint Sarita Bassil as a Member at Large. Simran/Shaheen	**CARRIED**

The President welcomed both members at large.

7. **Director of Operations/Labour Relations Officer Report** (Joy Correia & Terry Sway)

The bargaining survey will be open to members for a few weeks. The bargaining team will prepare for bargaining based on the survey results. Notice to bargain was sent to the university; they have not yet responded with information about their bargaining team. The Director of Operations indicated that the PDFA Bargaining Team needs another team member. Member-at-large Henry Prown was previously appointed to the team; he is from the Faculty of Arts. The Director of Operations suggested that someone from another area of campus would help to build team diversity. The Bargaining Team is a small group able to focus on bargaining based on the mandate provided by members; open bargaining would not be an advisable process. It was noted that bargaining is currently very slow in the public sector.

The Director of Operations shared that NASA's Administrative Assistant was unwell before leaving NASA. This resulted in an email response delay. There was a discussion about how PDFA emails are triaged: personal requests can be sensitive, so they are only shared with the Labour Relations Officer so that he can assist members confidentially. The Labour Relations Officer reports on Labour Relations issues each month. Information emails will be shared with the Executive Board going forward.

The Labour Relations Officer shared that the current inquiries include questions about immigration and the CRA.

8. **Communications Strategist Report** (Scott Harris)

The Communications Strategist requested a photo and bio from each of the new members-at-large.

He shared that bargaining survey results are being received. It was suggested that the survey information emphasize the importance of completing the survey because the responses will inform the PDFA mandate and bargaining. The survey questions are very focused for ease of response; they were developed by the bargaining team, Labour Relations staff, and the Communications Strategist.

The new Vice-President Communications and Communications Strategist will meet to discuss communications processes.

9. **President's report**

The President presented a draft communication to the university. The Executive shared suggested changes, including inclusion of statistics, flow, evidence, and that it focus on the system. It was also suggested that it include requests for action with short titles followed by improvement information. The document will be shared with the Director of Operations and Labour Relations Officer for their feedback. The Executive Board was asked to provide their feedback this week. It will also be used to develop talking points during meetings with university administration. Statistics based on the bargaining survey will be added to subsequent versions.

The PDFA President and Vice-President External met with the NASA President. He advised that the best leverage is the ability to use job action. This allows a union to publicize issues.

The President observed that post-doctoral fellows are unlikely to be considered essential workers. He suggested that teaching assignments might increase post-doctoral leverage.

The PDFA President attended the NASA/AASUA rally on October 9.

The President engaged with a Senator on LinkedIn and encouraged everyone to join the Executive WhatsApp group.

The President initiated a discussion regarding the Individual Development Plan. PIs should complete it as an annual evaluation but unfortunately there are issues around time to interact. This demonstrates how post-doctoral fellows are treated inconsistently as trainees rather than employees.

10. **VP Finance Report** (Simran Kaur)

The Vice-President Finance coordinated the meal arrangements and payments for the PDFA Member Appreciation Week. The Vice-President Internal will share Research Day winner information with the Vice-President Finance.

The Executive honoraria have also been prepared; the Vice-President Finance requested that board members contact her to receive them.

The Vice-President Finance advised that the PDFA invest surplus funds, as per the annual budget. This will generate more funds for the PDFA to support more members to attend conferences. She has an appointment with TD and will present more information at the next board meeting.

It is critical for post-doctoral fellows to attend conferences, but the PDFA cannot support every travel grant request. This issue will be added to the letter to senior administration, emphasizing the benefit from these members representing the university. It was noted that as employees, post-doctoral fellows should receive development funding to further careers and skills.

Movement of the post-doctoral fellows office to Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies was not discussed with the PDFA.

11. **Member-at-Large Report** (Henry)

The Member-at-Large has transferred the social media accounts (Facebook and LinkedIn) to the new Vice-President Communications. He shared that he would be willing to moderate or administer these if needed.

12. **VP Operations Report** (Razieh Firouzihaji)

The Vice-President Operations participated in the PDFA Appreciation Week.

13. **VP External Report** (Alsayed Mostafa)

The Vice-President External attended the meeting with the PDFA President and NASA President. They felt that the NASA President had many good ideas.

The President and Vice-President External will attend the CAPS event on October 28 virtually. CAPS is developing a national survey; the Vice-President External shared the survey with everyone. CAPS is hoping for participation from all post-docs in Canada so that they can raise the post-doctoral voice to the tri-council and petition for funding. The previous 2019 survey collated post-doctoral statistics with no major outcomes.

The VP External shared a new initiative in his department office: the Chair will be meeting with all post-doctoral fellows.

14. **VP Internal Report** (MD Shaheen)

The Vice-President Internal attended the General Faculties Council meeting. He shared concerns about the University's Strategic Initiative Plan, which is missing concrete details or milestones. The plan indicated that the PHD salary has been raised to $25,000 per year, but the Vice-President Internal noticed that this is not an improvement from the salary already listed on the GPS website. The current minimum salary for post-doctoral fellows is almost $40,000 per year. The Culture of Care also seemed aspirational but unconvincing. All of the Professors will be participating in safety training.

The Vice-President Internal assisted with the PDFA Research Session and Representation Week as well as the barbecue.

15. **VP Communications Report** (Ayesha Iqbal)

The new Vice-President Communications is learning the current processes and developing a plan.

16. **Other Business**

There was no other business.

17. **In Camera**

There was no in-camera session.

18. **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:53pm

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Abdullah, President & Chair   Samantha Spurrer, Executive Assistant