

**PDFA Executive Council Meeting
November 21, 2024
Teleconference Meeting**

Present: Abdullah Mohiuddin, President
MD Shaheen, VP Internal
Alsayed Mostafa, VP External
Razieh FirouziHaji, VP Operations
Simran Kaur, VP Finance
Henry Prown, Member at Large
Michael Baggaley, Member at Large

Staff: Samantha Spurrier, Executive Assistant
Tamara Phiri, Administrative Assistant
Scott Harris, Communications
Joy Correia, Director of Operations

Regrets: Terry Sway, Labour Relations Officer
Ayesha Iqbal, VP Communications
Sarita Bassil, Member at Large

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 11:07am.

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/Alsayed
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CARRIED

4. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: To approve the minutes for October 17, 2024 Shaheen/Simran
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CARRIED

5. New Member at Large

Ramana Vaka expressed interest in serving as member at large. He will be invited to the next board meeting and approved at that time.

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

The Labour Relations Officer sent his regrets. The Director of Operations reported that PDFA labour relations has been quiet. There was an inquiry from the university about the benefit entitlements for trainees and guests; these members are eligible for benefit coverage and this information was provided to the university.

The Director of Operations shared that a member has expressed interest in serving on the bargaining team. There was a discussion and it was agreed that this is a crucial role. The Bylaws specify that this should be the President, but the President will be leaving the university at the end of the year. The next President will likely be

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a current Executive Board member and will be appointed by the board.

7. Vice-President Internal Report (MD Shaheen)

The VP Internal provided an update from the General Faculties Council meeting. The Strategic Plan presents the University as a business interested in profit and not infrastructure. The University is planning to add more students; the province wants additional students before more funding will be provided. Bargaining during this climate will be challenging.

The VP Internal also facilitated the Research Day awards and participated in the Joint Health and Safety Committee; safety information will be released soon.

The Vice-President Internal exited the meeting.

8. Communications Strategist Report (Scott Harris)

The Communications Strategist has received the latest dataset from university. He met with the President and new VP Communications to discuss the handover to new VP Communications. The Communications Strategist requested email newsletter content be sent next week and early December for inclusion in the newsletter. He advised that he will also require content early in January.

The bargaining survey results were shared with the Director of Operations and Labour Relations Officer and will be shared with the Administrative Assistant to distribute to the board. The Director of Operations and Labour Relations Officer will develop a summary for the membership. Member priorities include wages, benefits, academic freedom, vision care, and the right to instruct. Proposals will be developed based on this feedback. Suggestions included stronger language regarding teaching such as preference over external candidates or a guaranteed opportunity to instruct during the course of the post-doctoral fellowship.

There was a brief discussion of the CAPS survey and it was suggested that the PDFA bargaining survey results be shared. Concerns were expressed about keeping this information confidential. The Communications Strategist will explore how to report the results with members without sharing them with university administration.

9. President's report

Following the federal government's announcement of restrictions on international students, which will severely impact the university funding, the Alberta Minister of Advanced Education posted on LinkedIn announcing a review of how universities are funded. She has met with graduate student associations, but did not invite the PDFA for a meeting. The President sent a letter to the minister and Professor Jack Mintz (University of Calgary) emphasizing the value of universities and research. He also urged USDF Calgary and Canadian Association of PFDs to write letters to the minister.

The President recommended that NASA President Quinn Benders be invited to the start of the next PDFA Executive Board meeting.

He shared a draft coalition proposal of the PDFA with NASA, AASUA, GSA, and SU. This would be an opportunity for each campus association to share about common issues, and build awareness and solidarity.

The President signed onto a letter in solidarity with Queens University and posted a video. As a result, their salary has increased 39%.

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Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) information was added to the newsletter. This will provide immigrants with information about listing their PDF appointment.

The President attended the CAPS meeting. They will be running a solidarity campaign.

He advised that he will be happy to support the next President of the PDFA.

The university holds many trainings about grant opportunities and applications; this information needs to be relayed to post-doctoral fellows. The Research Partner Newsletter includes information that will be helpful to members. The President recommended that the signup link be included in the PDFA newsletter. The VP Finance recommended that information about the Campus Bridge calendar also be included in the newsletter.

The President has been invited to the Board Human Resources Compensation Committee on November 26. The Director of Operations explained that this is the Board of Governors subcommittee that sets the bargaining mandate. She recommended that the President present PDFA concerns such as training, PDFA life, and positioning for opportunities following fellowship appointment. The University could share ATS opportunities, learning and development opportunities, and recognize post-doctorate fellows on committees without incurring any costs. The Director of Operations will share missing opportunities for the PDFA.

The President reported that he declined to speak at the Service Award because he was provided a speech. These awards do not usually include PDFs.

The President met with the Provost and other University Administration. The Provost commented that the orientation was remarkable; the President responded that this is a basic expectation. He also shared PDF issues as outlined in the recent letter.

The President attended an EDI meeting. The President expressed frustration that PDFs were constantly referred to as students.

A former PDF posted on Reddit to express his disappointment with the University of Alberta PDF program. Critiques included the quality of work and future work opportunities. The President suggested that everyone review this.

There will be an onboarding event in March. The President forwarded this to the VP Internal and VP External for discussion at the next meeting.

10. VP Finance Report (Simran Kaur)

The VP Finance reported that the travel grants have been reviewed. The PDFA has both online and offline award options. The VP Finance explained to a member that PDFs can only receive an award once. Cheques for pending awards are all complete.

The VP Finance inquired into GPS support for conference attendance. The President included this in his letter. The VP Finance volunteered to contact the GPS office directly about this.

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

Member-at-Large Henry Prown reported that the VP Communications now has control over the social media accounts. He advised that the role of the PDFA president will be resolved before the current President leaves.

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12. Member-at-Large Report (Michael Baggaley)

Member-at-Large Michael Baggaley has developed a report of Collective Bargaining Agreements that have been signed at U15 institutions. This highlights the differences between the University of Alberta PDFA and other institutions and includes the employee, trainee, and guest designations. For instance, the tentative Queen's agreement includes the addition of \$200,000 to a professional development and travel fund as well as a childcare support \$2250 per member per year. The University of Waterloo agreement covers all PDFs whose funding is managed by the university, regardless of funding source. These universities are far exceeding the University of Alberta, which provides the PDFA leverage in bargaining. The University needs to be competitive to recruit the best PDFs. The full report will be available in the drive.

13. Member-at-Large Report (Sarita Bassil)

Member-at-Large Sarita Bassil sent her regrets.

14. VP Operations Report (Razieh FirouziHaji)

The VP Operations attended an onboarding event and was told that post-docs can use several services at the Career Centre for free. The VP Operations booked an appointment but was told that this would cost \$30. The only people who are charged are post-docs. The President encouraged everyone to take action for issues that they encounter.

15. VP External Report (Alsayed Mostafa)

The VP External requested information about pay cheque deductions and benefits. The Labour Relations Officer has been responding to members who ask and explaining the Collective Agreement. It was suggested that an information session be held. It was noted that benefits information should be shared during onboarding. As well, the TD1 and TD1 AB paperwork should be provided to all employees and submitted; if not completed then all staff receive the basic amount. If HR and pay is incorrect, then it needs to be changed systemically.

There was a discussion about the role of President. This will be discussed further at the next meeting.

16. VP Communications Report (Ayesha Iqbal)

The VP Communications sent her regrets.

17. Other Business

There was no other business.

18. In Camera

There was an in-camera session.

19. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:09pm

Abdullah Mohiuddin, President & Chair

Samantha Spurrer, Executive Assistant