

President's Message: June 2022

Dave Westwood, DFA President, 2022-2023



It is my pleasure to be writing to you all again as your DFA President for the 2022-2023 year. During the coming year, I will use this column to share updates on current issues that I think will be of interest to DFA Members, and to offer some thoughts and ideas on ways that the Association can support you in your work. In this message I will focus on thanks, personnel matters, collective bargaining, collective agreement reminders for challenging economic times, and suggestions for ways to engage with the DFA.

Thanks

Let me begin by thanking all the volunteers who served the DFA in various capacities over the past year. As you all know well, 2021-2022 was a difficult year for many reasons related to the continued impact of COVID-19 on our lives including our academic working conditions, and I recognize and appreciate the extra time and effort that our volunteers dedicated to the work of the Association. In particular, I would like to extend huge thanks and gratitude to Dr. Tara Perrot for serving so capably as our President for the past year. I would be remiss if I did not also thank all our DFA Staff members (Jack Brown, Kristin Hoyt, Barbara MacLennan, Lynn Purves and Catherine Wall) for their continued hard work and excellence, ensuring that we are able to serve the many diverse needs of DFA Members.

Staffing News

In staffing news, Barbara MacLennan has now entered her well-deserved retirement after 33 years of exceptional service as the DFA Professional Officer. On June 15, we held a small reception at the Waegwoltic Club to honour and recognize Barb's unparalleled contributions to the DFA. This was a great opportunity to connect with current and former DFA Members and to reminisce about the many significant events that define our shared history and of which Barb was such an integral part. We wish Barb all the best in retirement, and we will miss her tremendously.



In related news, Jack Brown now becomes our sole DFA Professional Officer after starting his position in early April 2022. He worked alongside Barb for several months on all important DFA files including grievances, collective bargaining, and Member-facing consultations and workshops. Jack is a wonderful addition to our complement of exceptional DFA staff members, and we are very pleased to have him on our team.

Membership Survey Coming June 23

On Thursday, June 23, DFA Members can watch for an email invitation to participate in a DFA survey regarding unauthorized on-line platforms, such as Course Hero, that encourage students to share content from academic courses, including copyrighted materials, classroom recordings, lecture slides, and sensitive information related to tests, quizzes, or exams. We invite you to complete this short survey to help us learn more about the scope of this problem and your experiences so we can better advocate for your interests.

Collective Bargaining

Many of you are surely wondering what is happening on the collective bargaining front, as our current Collective Agreement expires at the end of this month. On April 1, 2022, the DFA gave Notice to Bargain for a new Collective Agreement, but it is proving a major challenge to schedule dates for the full DFA and Board bargaining teams due to various issues related to work and vacation schedules, and other personal factors. It seems unlikely that the teams will be able to meet before September when work schedules become more stable. As in past years, we will issue Bargaining Bulletins after each bargaining meeting to provide updates and explain the next steps of the process. In case you are wondering, even though the current agreement expires June 30, the terms and conditions of that agreement continue until a new agreement is ratified.

Like you, we remain concerned about the harsh economic reality of historically high levels of inflation coupled with steadily rising interest rates and the impact on your ability to make ends meet. We remain hopeful that the Board will recognize the importance of fair wage increases for DFA Members, and I can assure you that we will remind them that you are a priority and that their economic package needs to reflect that reality.

Collective Agreement Reminders for Challenging Economic Times

If, like me, you are feeling the pinch on your finances as costs and interest rates continue to rise, it is worth reviewing some of the economic benefits in the Collective Agreement.

1. **Anomalies adjustments** – Article 31A: If you think your salary might be low for your rank and Y-value, you should consider an application to the Anomalies Fund. Have a look at the Collective Agreement to see how it works. Click [here](#) for the most recent breakdown of Y-values and salaries by Faculty.
2. **Special salary increases** - Clause 8.01(b): If you believe you deserve a higher salary, you can consider talking to your Dean about a Special Salary Increase. The Collective Agreement states “the Board may bargain with Members with respect to upward adjustments of regular salary rate.” Deans make the requests via the Provost and if the request proceeds, then the Board puts forth a motion to ABC for approval, within the parameters of the allotments for that particular year.
3. **Stipends for administrative service** - Clause 31.46: In some units, administrative tasks and roles are routinely associated with a financial stipend. It might be worth having a conversation with your Chair or Dean about this possibility rather than simply adding work to your already full plate. Any stipend not specified by the Collective Agreement requires ABC approval.

Speak Truth to Power: Black Queer and Trans Lives Also Matter

On Wednesday evening (6-8 pm), July 13, 2022 tune in to the 11th episode in Dalhousie University’s series **Speak Truth to Power: Black Queer and Trans Lives Also Matter**. This will be a Microsoft Teams live event <https://bit.ly/3NZZKxU>; details are on Dal’s Facebook Event page <https://fb.me/e/4GAehIgT>.

Moderators/hosts: Dr. Theresa Rajack-Talley, Vice Provost, Equity & Inclusion and Dr. OmiSoore Dryden, James R. Johnston Chair in Black Canadian Studies, Dalhousie.

Panelists: Dr. Rachel Zellars, Assistant Professor, Social Justice and Community Studies, Saint Mary’s University and Chris Cochrane (Elle Noir). *(Additional panel members to be confirmed.)*

4. **Health Spending Account (HSA)** - Clause 32.18: A significant number of DFA Members do not use their full entitlement under the HSA. Every DFA Member can claim up to \$1000 per year for health expenses not otherwise covered by other provincial benefits or Dalhousie health benefits. At a minimum, you can always claim the health/dental premiums that you pay each month. For details and to file your claim, [click here](#).
5. **Professional Development Allowance (PDA)** – Clause 32.19: Like the Health Spending Account, PDA entitlements often remain unused by DFA Members. The maximum PDA is \$802 for the fiscal year 2021-2022 and \$813 for the fiscal year 2022-2023. Remember to keep receipts for relevant purchases during the year, and set a reminder in your calendar to **submit your claim**. Financial Services accepts only one electronic form per year from each Member and will reimburse PDA forms between April 1 and February 28 each fiscal year.

The PDA application process has changed. It is managed through Chrome River, an expense management web application. Contact your Dean's office to find out which account number to put on your submission. Login to Chrome River via **myDal Hub - Travel and Expenses (Chrome River)** or via **Dal Online - Web for Administrators - Electronic forms and Transactions - Travel and Expenses (Chrome River)**. Email chromeriver@dal.ca for more information on how to submit your claim.

Engaging with the DFA

We always want to hear from our Members. If you are encountering difficulties with any aspect of your working conditions, please reach out to us for advice and support. Even if the Collective Agreement does not have a relevant provision, we can often help you to advocate for your interests with strategic advice or by attending a meeting with you for support. You can reach us several ways: call the DFA office at 902 494-3722, or email dfa@dal.ca (Lynn Purves, DFA Administrative Officer), jack.brown@dal.ca (DFA Professional Officer). You are also welcome to email me directly at the address at the bottom of this email. We will make sure your message is directed to the best person to help you.

Even if you are not encountering difficulties, we still want to hear from you with feedback about what we are doing, or what you are seeing around campus, on committees, at meetings of the Senate/Board, or in the broader community. There are lots of opportunities to volunteer with the DFA and we are always looking for new people to join us in our work. It is also wonderful to see previous volunteers return. Reach out to me directly if you are interested and we can surely find something that fits your interests and availability.

Sincerely,



Dave Westwood
DFA President 2022-2023
David.Westwood@dal.ca