

## President's Message: "We are here!"

Julia Wright, DFA President, 2019-20

*We've got to make noises in greater amounts!  
So, open your mouth, lad! For every voice counts!  
--Dr. Seuss, Horton Hears a Who*

After each of the last couple of President's messages, I've received e-mails that ask an important question: **what can we do?**

We've all heard some version of Sayre's Law for academics: our arguments are so vicious because academic stakes are so small. The insidious corollary of Sayre's Law is this: speaking up will never be worth it. But these sorts of quips miss something very important. We are a collective as well as individuals, a collegium responsible for [governance](#), and **if we all stay silent then our academic expertise will not be heard**. Those small stakes add up to big stakes—to program integrity, fairness and rigor, and public accountability.

My epigraph above is from the moment that the Mayor of the Whos finds one child who is not yelling "we are here." When the child adds his voice to the others, it tips the balance—they are finally heard.

I talked about collegial governance in [June](#), but below I offer some specific suggestions (this draws on a workshop I've run a couple of times at other universities). It's a long list—but if we each just

picked one thing from it, then we could start tipping the balance.



### 1. Use your tenure.

It's a cliché, but for good reason. If Terms of Reference aren't being followed, evidence isn't being provided, or decision-making is happening behind closed doors or through the wrong group, you can ask about it with the protection of both academic freedom and a continuing or tenured appointment. (Limited-term and pre-tenure faculty in the DFA also have academic freedom, but we all know the pressures that might make it difficult for them to exercise it.)

**See something, say something.** Collegial

governance is peculiar to academic workplaces: we have this responsibility because of our qualifications. We use evidence-based analysis in the interests of the academic mission every day—do it in governance too.

*"If collegial governance lacks open communicative dialogue, all that is left is power—power that lays predominantly with the administration. Collegial governance only exists if it is exercised. My advice is to use it"*  
James Compton, CAUT's Past-President ([CAUT Bulletin](#)).

### 2. Show up.

We can't all go to everything—that's not sustainable, given our other responsibilities. But what if we each picked a couple of extra university meetings to go to each year? Decide to spend just

10 hours each year going to meetings or events you don't have to attend—even just 5 hours from each of us could make a big difference.

The Board members that oversee university finances don't know us, and that's part of the problem—they only hear selected bits'n'pieces from senior administration. If just one in 50 DFA Members went to Board meetings ([there are just five meetings per year](#)), and early enough to have a chat at the coffee-and-snacks table before the meetings start, it would exponentially increase contact between the Board and academics. Watch for the Budget Advisory Committee presentations, too. If you're worried about faculty complement, tuition, or anything else related to the budget, that's the place to speak up: ask about priorities, evidence, analysis, and future plans. Go to Senate, or Faculty Council. Come to DFA consultations to contribute to our discussions about how to improve academic working conditions at Dalhousie. Consider what matters most to you, and find the time to go to a couple of the relevant meetings each year.

### **3. Be prepared.**

We're all on committees. Make sure you know the Terms of Reference and relevant procedures to keep those processes on track: fair, reasonable, rigorous, and consistent with the Collective Agreement. Ask if you're not sure (we're at [dfa@dal.ca](mailto:dfa@dal.ca) and your faculty regulations are likely online). Talk to precarious faculty (CUPE, limited-term, pre-tenure) to make sure you hear their views.

Mentor colleagues with less committee experience: respect independence and confidentiality, of course, but give them some history, direct them to relevant documents, listen when they are struggling with a difficult decision.

Collegial governance is not just about Senate and the Board: it is part of our daily work from department meetings to appointments committees to program reviews. Good practices are an end in

and of themselves, but they also support a culture of evidence-based, transparent governance.

### **4. Restore internal flows of information.**

The university administration relies heavily on consultants. These consultants are, in key respects, replacing faculty as advisors on the academic mission. We get external advice, too, but it is always a kind of peer review: academics from other universities evaluate our academic programs, our tenure and promotion files, our research grants and articles, and so on. The university administration is drawing instead on executive search consultants for hiring, the [Educational Advisory Board](#) for curriculum and planning, and so on. This cuts us off from the key decision-makers, and cuts the senior administration off from academic expertise about our programs, our research, our students, and academic standards.

**Question this.** Analyze those presentations, reports, and candidate lists that are coming from outside and share your concerns if you see errors and oversights. Ask how much it costs to hire an external consultant rather than rely on qualified faculty and staff here at Dalhousie—that is money that could be spent on better supporting the academic mission. Share information you gather from committees so that more of your colleagues hear about discussions at Senate, Faculty Council, department meetings, working groups, and all the rest of them.

### **5. Resist Busy-Work.**

Give some thought to what will do the most good. Ask questions if you think a committee or a bureaucratic requirement is not worth the time it would take. Nothing dramatic: we all have to do our jobs. But, hey, maybe doing data-entry for two days to put a cv into some random new interface isn't going to do as much to advance the academic mission as revising the Terms of Reference for a key committee to make it more effective and accountable. Shouldn't we at least have that

conversation, in the interests of the academic rigor and integrity?

This also connects to my point about sharing information: we have myriad ad hoc committees, working groups, rapid action task forces, and so on, sometimes doing the same work simultaneously or repeating work done just a few years ago. Because they operate outside of normal governance hierarchies and standing committees, the work is often unknown and regularly lost. If we share information, we have a better chance of recognizing these time-wasters and doing something about it.

Share the workload, too. If you and your colleagues are concerned about an issue, work together on gathering information and organizing a response. Our research often mandates that we work alone; governance is inherently collegial, and that is important to the range of information you can draw on, the perspectives you can bring to bear, and managing workload.

## 6. Talk to the DFA.

As I noted in my [June President's Message](#), our rights to academic freedom and collegial governance are in the Collective Agreement. So are principles of [No Discrimination](#), which include “a working and learning environment that is free from personal harassment”; [Intellectual Property](#) rights over our research and teaching materials; and processes for appointments, tenure, and promotion, including “[fairness and natural justice](#).”

If a committee goes awry, committee members are in the best position to, and responsible for, bringing

it back into line with the Terms of Reference and other relevant documents such as the Collective Agreement. No one should feel pressure not to act, because it's our job to act. Talk to the DFA if you're in a difficult situation. Ask the DFA if you think there might be a relevant clause in the Collective Agreement but don't know how to find it.

Come to DFA meetings, and not just when bargaining is on. The DFA regularly advocates on a number of fronts: the budget; collegial governance; working conditions; occasional matters from uniweb to the after-effects of the devastating fire on the Agricultural campus. But we need to hear from you. What problems are you facing? What are your priorities?

DFA meetings are also an opportunity to talk to your colleagues in other units. You'd be surprised how many of us are having the same problems, traceable to the reduction of academic spending in the university budget or to a top-down governance culture that is incompatible with collegial principles. These are opportunities for collaboration and joint action.

As CAUT's Past-President, James Compton, put it, “If collegial governance lacks open communicative dialogue, all that is left is power—power that lays predominantly with the administration. Collegial governance only exists if it is exercised. My advice is to use it” ([CAUT Bulletin](#)). So let's all participate, just a little bit more, to be heard: “We are here!”

*Please contact me anytime, [Julia.Wright@dal.ca](mailto:Julia.Wright@dal.ca), or the DFA office at [dfa@dal.ca](mailto:dfa@dal.ca).*

## Ever wonder how decisions are made at Dal?

Here at DFA, we regularly get questions from our Members about the role we play in governance and decision-making at Dalhousie. Dr. Julia Wright, DFA President, has created a [brief overview](#) of the key elements of decision-making at our university, how the Budget Advisory Committee operates and solicits input, and who the DFA works with to help our Members address issues and concerns.



**(From left - right):** Barbara MacLennan, DFA Professional Officer; Jeff Hoyle, Plant, Food & Environmental Science; Elizabeth Kay-Raining Bird, Communication Sciences & Disorders; Patti Doyle-Bedwell, Continuing Education; Tim Jukes, Psychology & Neuroscience; Lynn Purves, DFA Administrative Officer; Shelley McKibbin, Reference & Research Services, Killam Library; and Ray Larkin, Pink Larkin, Chief Negotiator. Watch for upcoming notices profiling each of our team members.

## DFA advocacy in lead up to Federal Election

With the October 21 federal election just a month away, the DFA has been busy advocating for increased government support of universities and other issues affecting post-secondary education (PSE). Here is what we've been up to:

- In August, DFA President Julia Wright and DFA President-Elect Dave Westwood met with Christine Saulnier (NDP) and Andy Fillmore (Liberal, incumbent) to discuss issues facing PSE.
- Julia wrote an [opinion piece](#) calling on the federal and provincial governments to work together to restore public funding for PSE. That piece was printed in the [Chronicle Herald](#) and [Academica Top 10](#). It has also been getting social media traction in Nova Scotia and other parts of Canada.
- The piece was sent to the candidates in the Halifax and Cumberland-Colchester ridings to inform them of the issue. To engage the student body, we sent it to the Dalhousie Student Union, Dalhousie Agricultural Student Association, the Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students and the Canadian Federation of Students.
- Julia was interviewed for the Canadian Association of University Teachers' [Election Primer](#) distributed last week by CAUT as part of their federal election advocacy efforts.

- Watch for posters displayed around our campuses to draw attention to the issues of equity, accessibility and precarity – some of the challenges that the government must address more effectively.
- Halifax candidates will be invited to attend a public Teach-In on Islam/Islamophobia on October 8. (See article below.)

As we get closer to election day, watch for reminders on social media. The DFA encourages you to take part in the democratic process and cast your vote!

*“I think democracy depends on a sense of what I call ‘citizen efficacy’ in a large number of people – a sense that there’s somewhere you can go, some levers you can push, some votes you can make. And that revivifies democracy.” (Philosopher Charles Taylor on CBC Radio’s *The Sunday Edition*).*

## Panel releases Report on Lord Dalhousie’s History on Slavery and Race

When Afua Cooper agreed to serve as chair of the Dal-commissioned Scholarly Panel to Examine Lord Dalhousie’s History on Slavery and Race back in late 2016, she didn’t expect it to become a nearly three-year project.

“But looking back, I think it was the right chunk of time for that research and this report,” says Dr. Cooper, a faculty member in the Departments of History and Sociology & Social Anthropology and former James R. Johnston Chair in Black Canadian Studies.

“And that’s because our report is based in history, and founded in historical research — research that took place locally, nationally and internationally. And that takes time.”

The [report](#), released earlier this month, offers a thorough accounting of the various intersections between George Ramsay, the Ninth Earl of Dalhousie who commissioned the founding of Dalhousie University in 1818 while serving as Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, and the institution and legacy of slavery. *(taken from dal.ca, link to the [full article here](#))*

### Fair Employment Week

Watch for information about the annual Fair Employment Week in Halifax next month. The DFA is collaborating with the Association of Nova Scotia University Teachers and CUPE 3912 on this year’s events. In the meantime, please visit <http://makeitfair.caut.ca/> to join the campaign.

You can share your story on how the precarity of your position has impacted you, and find resources you can use to raise awareness of the issues.

## Teach-In on Islam and Islamophobia

On Tuesday, October 8, 2019, please join us for a panel and open discussion of Islam and its history, including recent Islamophobia. Panelists include a number of professors from Halifax:

- Afua Cooper, History/Sociology and Social Anthropology, Dalhousie
- Rodica Firanescu, Arabic Studies, Dalhousie
- Syed Adnan Hussain, Religious Studies, St. Mary's University
- Colin Mitchell, History, Dalhousie
- Howard Ramos, Sociology and Social Anthropology, Dalhousie.

Halifax Central Library  
5440 Spring Garden Road  
Paul O'Regan Hall  
7:00 pm -8:45 pm (doors open at 6:45 pm)

*This event is organized by the Dalhousie Faculty Association & Dalhousie, sponsored by the Halifax Public Libraries.*



## DFA Public Speaker Series

We are kicking off our 2019-20 Public Speaker Series in Truro on October 16. The session is open to faculty, staff, students and members of the public. We hope you can join us!

### The Tooth of the Matter: The Incidence & Management of Periodontal Disease in Dogs & Cats



Wednesday, October 16  
6:30 -7:30 pm  
Colchester East Hants Public Library  
Makerspace Room  
754 Prince Street, Truro

Join DFA Member Amy Birchall, RVT, for an interactive talk and learn how to identify, treat and manage periodontal disease in dogs and cats. Amy has been a Registered Veterinary Technician since 2003. She came to Dalhousie in 2015 and teaches small animal anesthesia, emergency/critical care, and dentistry.



## In Memoriam: Remembering Patrick Kerans

Last month, Patrick Kerans passed away at the age of 89. Pat was the DFA's chief negotiator in the early years. Pat taught at Dalhousie's School of Social Work, and worked with adult students, particularly Mi'kmaq. He was a long-time advocate for social justice, and, along with his wife Marion, was key in the development of Halifax's first housing co-op. Pat and Marion were commissioners on the People's Food Commission in the late 1970's. One of Pat's books, *The Land of Milk and Honey*, is an analysis of a food system making it difficult for farmers to farm and for people to afford healthy food. The DFA has made a donation to the Dalhousie Student Union Food Bank in memory of Pat.

### DFA Supports Hurricane Dorian Relief Efforts

In the aftermath of Hurricane Dorian, the DFA has made a \$2,000 donation to the Dalhousie International Students Association to support those students with family members living in the Bahamas.

## Workplace Wellness

- [Civility at Work: Benefits and Barriers](#) (Halifax, Truro, Saint John) Sept 23
- [Rumours in the Workplace](#) (Webinar) Sept 30
- [Weekly Open Mindfulness Group](#), Oct 1 – Dec 3
- [Communications for Complex Conversations with Students](#), Oct 3
- [MH101: Recognizing and Responding to Students in Distress](#), Oct 8
- [Communication Clarity: Assessing the Situation & Understanding Your Needs](#) (Halifax, Truro, Saint John), Oct 8
- [Valuing Employee Performance \(for supervisors and managers\)](#), Oct 15
- [Communication Confidence: Effectively Speaking Up at Work](#) (Halifax, Truro, Saint John), Oct 15
- [The Basics of Conflict Resolution](#), Oct 18
- [Caregiver Support: Compassion Fatigue](#), Oct 21
- [Communication Competence: Approaches to Challenging Conversations](#), Oct 22
- [Getting to the Heart of the Matter: Having Non-Defensive Conversations](#), Oct 23 – Dec 18

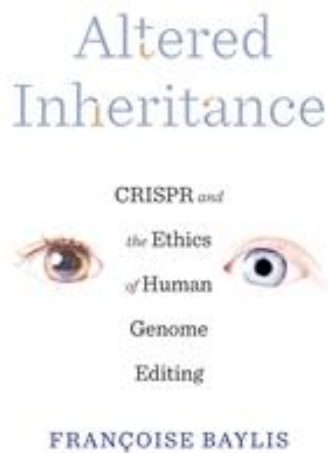
## Research You Can Use

[Projected declines in global DHA availability for human consumption as a result of global warming](#) (Dalhousie University and University of Toronto)

[Menthol Cigarette Restrictions could hike cost, cut use](#) (Washington University in St. Louis)

[High schools that have good connections experience lower rates of suicide attempts](#) (University of Rochester)

## Books You Can Use



### **Altered Inheritance: CRISPR and the Ethics of Human Genome Editing**

*Françoise Baylis. Harvard University Press, 2019; 304 pp; ISBN 9780674976719*

**Françoise Baylis** is University Research Professor at Dalhousie, a member of the Order of Canada and the Order of Nova Scotia, as well as a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences. She participated in the 2015 International Summit on Human Gene Editing and is a member of the WHO Expert Advisory Committee on Developing Global Standards for Governance and Oversight of Human Genome Editing.

Earlier this month, she launched her book *Altered Inheritance*, offering “critical insights into the scientific, ethical, and political implications of human genome editing. Designer babies, once found only in science fiction, have become a reality. We are entering a new era of human evolution with the advent of a technology called CRISPR, which allows scientists to modify

our genes. Although CRISPR shows great promise for therapeutic use, it raises thorny ethical, legal, political, and societal concerns because it can be used to make permanent changes to future generations ... The author insists that we must all have a role in determining our future as a species ... Members of the public with different interests and diverse perspectives must be among the decision makers; only in this way can we ensure that societal concerns are taken into account and that responsible decisions are made. We must be engaged and informed, think critically, and raise our voices as we create our future together.”

Visit [Harvard University Press](http://Harvard University Press) for more information.

### **DFA Office Hours**

7:30 am – 3:30 pm  
Monday to Friday

Drop in during office hours at 1443  
Seymour Street in Halifax, call 902-  
494-3722 or email [dfa@dal.ca](mailto:dfa@dal.ca).

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**Feedback or news we can use? Contact DFA Communications Officer [Catherine.Wall@dal.ca](mailto:Catherine.Wall@dal.ca)**

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