

President's Message: The importance of participating in collegial governance

Julia Wright, DFA President, 2019-20

*"To advance teaching, scholarship and research in the University."
-- DFA Constitution ("Purpose of the DFA")*



Academic unions are rather unusual in the world of labour relations because they do not stop at pay, working conditions, job protections, and employer-union relations (though of course we work a lot on those too!). University collective agreements usually entrench fundamental academic principles, including collegial governance and academic freedom. These do not merely reflect our commitment to a university focussed on the academic mission and evidence-based decision-making. Such clauses belong in our collective agreements because collegial governance and academic freedom are key to our shared responsibility to ensure the quality, currency, and integrity of academic work.

Academic freedom protects "[basic research](#)," controversial research, and cutting-edge teaching, as well as vigorous and rigorous debate about how best to pursue the academic mission. Under our Collective Agreement, "Members of the bargaining unit are entitled to freedom, as appropriate to the Member's university appointment, in carrying out research and in publishing the results thereof, freedom of teaching and of discussion, freedom to criticize, including criticism of the Board and the Association, and freedom from institutional censorship" ([from 3.02](#)). Academic freedom protects the integrity of collegial governance too.

Collegial governance is too often disparaged as "service" but it is critical to ensuring quality in academic work. Whether sitting on a unit committee or Senate, recommending library purchases or participating in an appointments process, supporting more inclusive pedagogies or arguing for better mental health supports for our students, we all contribute in myriad ways to the work of collegial governance and to the flows of accurate information and evidence-based decision-making between units, Faculties, and cross-University bodies. Under our Collective Agreement, "the Board acknowledges the importance of participation by Members and other academic staff in the collegial process, including the internal regulation of the University and the selection of academic administrators" ([from 9.01](#)).

Lately, the collegial process has been diminished. Meaningful sharing of information, analysis, and discussion cannot be replaced by loosely framed surveys that get processed somewhere into something that may be used somehow. We've seen these surveys on such varied topics as the budget, campus climate, reputation, and upper administrative appointments. Among other problems, this approach easily directs discussions towards university-wide issues rather than granular information on the quality of specific programs,

[towards averages rather than outliers](#). There's also no opportunity in such a survey to put issues into perspective, to weigh the relative value of improving wifi in a couple of buildings against replacing a 2014 retiree with a tenure-stream appointment in a program struggling to maintain course offerings.

In early 2015, Professor Marjorie Stone brought a motion to Senate to collect better data. Its purpose was to gather information from units (not Faculties) on changes in faculty complement and the implications for research and academic programs. You can read about her introduction and the motion itself in the [26 January 2015 Minutes](#), but here are two key parts of the amended motion: "that Senate instruct SAPRC [Senate Academic Programs and Research Committee] to prepare summary reports for Senate on the reduction or changes in faculty numbers over the past seven years (the normal cycle for unit reviews)"; "That SAPRC report back to Senate on an annual basis beginning in April 2015 and in the interests of transparency, the report be made available to all Dalhousie faculty members, the DSU, and the Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students" (p. 8). Senate does not yet have this information, and neither did Dalhousie's Budget Advisory Committee when it worked on the budget for 2019-20 (I raised this at a consultation). Some Faculty-level data was collected, but, for Faculties with multiple units, that is not consistent with the spirit or the letter of the motion passed by Senate—and not particularly useful either because useful unit-level information can be lost if it is combined with all of the other units in a Faculty.

Senate used to have a meaningful role in such discussions. Here's a sample from the archive of Senate Minutes:

[President] Clark presented a report on 1990-91 budget implications . . . which addressed

specifically his decision that a reduction to the faculty complement of 7-10 positions was required to balance the 1990-91 budget. He said that he would be seeking the advice of Senate on this matter. Ms. Lane said that the Senate Academic Planning Committee would be considering the President's recommendations and will be giving advice to the President and reporting back to Senate. ([Minutes, January 1990](#), p. 6)

The Senate Academic Planning Committee (SAPC) also responded to the proposed cuts by noting that "it did plan an examination of the definition of complement and of the means by which the presidential recommendations are made" ([Minutes, February 1990](#), p. 13). These extensive discussions took place over 7-10 positions. There are units (including my own) that have *each* lost that many faculty positions this decade. How many units? Who knows. The 2015 motion was supposed to gather the information and share it, but, though the motion was carried, it was never carried out.

Collegial governance requires our meaningful participation at every level. That doesn't mean we all do everything—that isn't possible, especially with workload creep—but it does mean that each of us plays a vital part in the effective functioning of the university. Ask questions. Draw on your experience and knowledge. Assess the materials you're given. The answers we get in collegial processes may often be completely reasonable. But checking, as we know from scholarship, is the only way to catch errors and generate confidence in results—that's what Senate did in 1990, and what it tried to do in 2015.

Please feel free to contact the team at dfa@dal.ca or me at julia.wright@dal.ca.

Have your say! Collective Bargaining 2020

To prepare for collective bargaining in 2020, the DFA will be holding consultations with Members over the coming months. Watch your email for dates and locations near you.

DFA Drop In Tuesday, July 9 in Truro

DFA's President Julia Wright, President-Elect Dave Westwood and Professional Officer Barbara MacLennan will be in Truro on Tuesday, July 9 from 12:30 – 2:00 pm at the MacRae Library, Room 208. Come for a coffee and snacks, and discuss any questions or concerns you may have relevant to the DFA's work supporting faculty, counsellors and librarians at Dalhousie. See you then!

DFA Executive Committee Retreat in Truro

On Tuesday, August 20, the DFA will hold its 2019-20 Executive Committee Retreat in Truro. This will be the first DFA Executive meeting ever held on the Truro campus. Executive members will share their perspective on continuing the work of the previous Executive and setting the direction for collective bargaining in 2020. If you have any issues or concerns you would like to see on the DFA's radar, please reach out to an Executive member ([contact info here](#)) or email the office at dfa@dal.ca.

DFA Summer Office Hours

In June, July & August, the DFA office hours are 7:30 am - 3:30 pm, Monday to Thursday (with the exception of statutory holidays). Drop in during office hours at 1443 Seymour Street in Halifax, call 902-494-3722 or email dfa@dal.ca.

DFA members receive Dal Legacy Awards

Dalhousie's Legacy Awards program honours outstanding individuals for their contributions to the Dal community. The following DFA members were recognized in 2019. (Click [here](#) to see a full list of recipients.)

President's Research Excellence Emerging Investigator Award

- Mita Dasog (Science)
- Rita Orji (Computer Science)
- Karen Foster (FASS)
- Stefanie Colombo (Agriculture)
- Barret Kurylyk (Engineering)
- Mohammad Hajizadeh (Health)

President's Research Excellence Research Impact Award

- Jennifer Llewellyn (Law)
- Matthew Herder (Medicine/Law)

University Research Professorship

- Susan Howlett (Medicine)
- Krista Kesselring (FASS)

Academic Innovation Award

- Sarah Wells (Science)

Alumni Association Faculty Award of Excellence for Teaching

- Matthew Schnurr (FASS)

Award for Excellence in Graduate Supervision

- Susan Howlett (Medicine)

Early Career Faculty Award for Excellence in Teaching

- Scott Comber (Management)

Rosemary Gill Award for Outstanding service to students (other than teaching)

- Elizabeth Welsh (Science)
- Craig McCormick (Medicine)



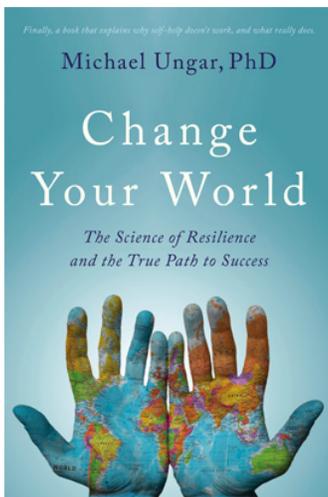
DFA Professional Officer recognized for outstanding service

Congratulations to DFA Professional Officer Barbara MacLennan, who recently received the Above & Beyond Award from the Canadian Organization of Faculty Association Staff (COFAS). Barbara, who earlier this year celebrated 30 years with the DFA, was nominated by her colleagues at the DFA office. The nomination comprised letters of support from: Dr. Kevin Grundy, former three-term DFA President; Ray Larkin, DFA's legal counsel since 1978; and Dalhousie's AVP of Human Resources Jasmine Walsh.

Dal Workplace Wellness: Time to relax

July is Relaxation Month and HR has asked us to forward information on the following events. Please sign up soon to register your interest in attending (and at least 10 days before the event). For more info, contact healthy@dal.ca

- [Stress Relaxation Techniques](#) (Halifax & Truro) July 11
- [Overcoming Burnout](#) (Webinar) July 16
- [Thinking Traps](#) (Webinar) July 18



Books You Can Use

[Change Your World: The Science of Resilience and the True Path to Success](#)

Michael Ungar: Sutherland House Incorporated, 2019; 256 pp; ISBN: 978-1-43952-199-9

Michael Ungar, Ph.D., Family Therapist and Professor of Social Work at Dalhousie, holds the Canada Research Chair in Child, Family & Community Resilience and is the Director of the Resilience Research Centre. His studies focus on the resilience of children and families involved with child welfare and mental health services, refugee and immigrant youth populations and community resilience, including resilience to violent extremism. Dr. Ungar has authored 15 books for mental health professionals, researchers and lay audiences. *Change Your World: The Science of Resilience and the True Path to Success* is for adults experiencing stress at work and at home. (bio adapted from dal.ca).

A copy of the book is available at the DFA office.

June is Pride Month

June is Pride Month in many communities across Canada. In recognition of Pride Month, the *Conversation Canada* published this [list of children's books](#) that challenge gender stereotypes and encourage multiple viewpoints.

Research You Can Use

- [Busting the Myth that Canadians are polarized on climate & immigration](#) (Dalhousie University)
- [Understanding the Human Side of Climate Change Relocation](#) (Université de Montreal)
- [Researchers develop drug targeting molecules to improve cancer treatment](#) (University of Notre Dame)
- [Public Universities: The Supply Side of Building a Skilled Workforce](#) (US National Bureau of Economic Research)

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Feedback or news we can use? Contact DFA Communications Officer Catherine.Wall@dal.ca

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