



Representing Faculty, Librarians,  
Veterinarians & College Faculty

# News & Views

October 2023

## Has The Last Shred of Trust in this Administration Been Destroyed?

On Wednesday, October 18, the Board of Governors will receive for their approval the Audited Financial Statements for the fiscal year ending April 30, 2023. Given the constant cries over “the deficit,” you might be surprised to learn that in this fiscal year

- Revenues grew by 10.4% or \$87M
  - Expenses grew by 4.1% or \$36M
- Revenues outgrew expenses by \$51M generating a \$19M surplus in fiscal year 2023 for the University<sup>1</sup>.

A key reason for the revenue growth is that, as we expected, there was an increased return to normal historical levels for various items, like residence, meals, and parking, along with a large increase in tuition revenues of \$17M. Nobody would deny that the hit to these activities during the pandemic put some pressure on every university but, in Guelph’s case, the University’s financial state benefitted from

- employee groups taking a 1% cost-of-living increase under Bill 124, and
- conversion to the University Pension Plan (UPP) liberating a huge amount of money that had been “Internally Restricted” for solvency payments (if the conversion did not occur).

The Senior Administration could have acknowledged the transient nature of such negative impacts on revenues, an anticipated return to normal, and the efforts and willingness of employee groups to mitigate the problem. Instead this Administration chose to act in ways that damaged the reputation of the University, steamrolled the notion of collegial governance, crushed the morale of UGFA members and the larger University community, and, likely, destroyed any last shred of trust that the kindest of people might have had in them. And this is the state we are in before they implement any of their “strategic transformation” initiatives.

**“Trust starts with trustworthy leadership.”**

**Barbara Brooks Kimmel**  
*Trust Inc. Strategies for Building Your Company's Most Valuable Asset, 2013*

Most recently, the Senior Administration has made an incredibly treacherous choice.

An historical reminder: From December 2018 to early January 2019, the UGFA bargained the Association’s consent to convert our pensions to the University Pension Plan. Those bargaining sessions involved Don O’Leary (VP Finance & Risk), Martha Harley (VP Human Resources), Tracey Jandrisits (AVP Faculty & Academic Staff Relations (FASR)), Daniel Draper (also FASR), and Charlotte Yates (Provost). By 2022 or so, the first four people in that list had left the University of Guelph, so all of the Administration’s “system memory” of those negotiations reside in now-President Charlotte Yates.

For newer members, [here is a quick recap](#). The Administration had over \$300M in “Internally Restricted” funds

<sup>1</sup> Detailed analysis will be presented in the UGFA Financial Advisory Committee’s 2024 report on University finances.

set aside, with a very large chunk of it “allocated” for pension solvency payments. Conversion to the UPP included escaping the solvency funding regime, meaning that much of this large amount of money would be shifted away from the current “allocation.” (Here, we use quotation marks because such “allocations” are notational at best.) The UGFA mounted a campaign to press the Administration to commit to the growth (i.e. net new) hiring of tenure-track/tenured and continuing-track/continuing members, hereafter referred to as “permanent members.” In the end, UGFA obtained a Letter of Understanding that (legally) committed the Administration to increase the number of permanent member positions by 40 by July 1, 2023.

The UGFA and FASR counted all active, dues-paying, permanent members, agreeing in writing that they numbered 808 as of January 10, 2019. In our most recent round of bargaining, the UGFA and the Administration agreed to divide the required growth into two stages: growth of 27 by July 1, 2023 and additional growth of 13 by January 1, 2024.

The Administration had roughly 4.5 years to deliver the growth of 27 permanent positions on July 1, 2023. Instead, they delivered a growth of only 4, count ‘em 4, permanent positions.

After we repeatedly requested the Administration’s permanent member count as at July 1, 2023, we were told at a meeting that they had met their commitment since they are counting advertisements as positions. When we asked them if they thought they had the right to unilaterally change who/how we count, they said yes.

This Administration has said that they can unilaterally redefine who/how we count in regard to UGFA’s growth hiring LOU.

The UGFA has filed a grievance.

Instead of taking their legal commitment seriously, progressively moving towards meeting it over the past 4.5 years, the Administration has made almost no progress, while with a straight face saying they have met the commitment! Furthermore, they announced that 39 UGFA members have applied for the Administration’s incentivized retirement program.

**“If you are untrustworthy, people will not trust you.”**

**Lao Tzu**

Their behaviour is dishonourable and it is shameful.

Of course, this Administration has a long record of recent horrible actions.

This Administration wants to force some UGFA members to teach via a hybrid mode of delivery.

At the start of the Fall semester, the Senior Administration approached the UGFA regarding their plans for what they called “the collaborative DVM program with Lakehead.” The model they propose has 20 UoG students taking their first two years in the vet program on the Lakehead campus. Lakehead would hire three veterinarian faculty members. Courses for the UoG students at the Lakehead and Guelph campuses would be scheduled at the same time. The instructor teaching the course would teach the students in their class room while also streaming their lecture to the students at the other campus. So, UoG vet students on both campuses would be taught by non-UGFA members, and UGFA members teaching such courses would be forced to teach via a hybrid mode of delivery and to hold office hours online. Under our current Collective Agreement, the Administration cannot do these things. They tell us that many faculty members are teaching this way already, disregarding the key point that any members doing so choose to request to do so and can choose to stop doing so for their next course. Students in our vet program who used to have all of their courses taught in person on our campus would now have some parts of their courses in their first two years streamed to them.

This Administration is pushing a relationship with Navitas.

When the Provost presented at Senate the idea of a relationship with this mercenary corporation, they heard only critical statements from Senators. The President capped the time allowed for questions in order to squash discussions. Subsequently, many University employee groups signed a letter of opposition to Navitas. When the UGFA pressed the Provost about these plans, she responded, "Why wouldn't you want the money?" The press picked up the Navitas story. The damage that a relationship with Navitas would do to the reputation of the University is clear to many stakeholder groups, but the Senior Administration, because they are transient, does not care. In recent weeks, there has been much distressing news about international students in Canada, and a reasonable person might think that this news would persuade the Administration to abandon the idea of an agreement with Navitas. At the September meeting of Senate, however, this Administration reiterated their plans to pursue this partnership, but Senators have been told that there will be no vote on this matter.

**"Trust is the foundation of leadership."**

**John C. Maxwell**

*The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership, 1988*

This Administration "paused" many programs.

They created their metrics. They used them to identify "weaknesses." Each Dean did their own thing. Some Chairs were asked for input, in some cases with a tiny window to respond. Each Dean made recommendations on what to "pause." The Provost decided to "pause" many programs, saying that this was done "after careful review" and to reduce the use of sessional instructors. When the UGFA asked for reports that were part of the "careful review," the Provost responded that there was nothing written down, that it was mostly just conversations with Deans. Programs were "paused" not long after students had accepted offers of admission. Nothing was brought to Senate for a vote. Instead, the President and the Provost explained that "pausing" a program is not a "major modification" requiring Senate approval. The Provost's Senate report estimated the savings at \$500K. The press picked up the story. The damage to the reputation of the University was great. For example, the "pauses" in Physics devastated many years of successful effort to increase the number of female STEM students, and the "pauses" in Art History came after that Department was assured that they had enough students in the program. The damage to faculty morale was incredible. The UGFA is in arbitration about this matter.

The list could go on and on. In every case, we see this Administration

- recklessly damage the reputation of the University that we love for our careers and that they visit during theirs;
- show disregard for collegial governance of the University. Indeed, even when Senate is engaged in a process, we routinely see administrators hold faculty spots on committees, often nominated by other administrators. In the yearly Senate survey, Senators report that this chamber is absent of real discussion and joint decision making;
- willfully ignore Collective Agreements or, at best, have discussions with their employees after the Administration has already made and acted upon a decision that is counter to the CA; and
- increase the workload, stress, and challenges faced by employees, while virtue signaling about "wellness."

The UGFA has told this Administration that we believe that member morale and trust in the Administration are at an all-time low.

The UGFA will keep you updated on all of the matters discussed in this newsletter.

Please e-mail us at [facassoc@uoguelph.ca](mailto:facassoc@uoguelph.ca) if you think we can be of assistance to you.