

SMUFU President's Report

Prepared for the SMUFU Spring Meeting - April 24, 2024

Dear Colleagues,

We are in uncertain times at SMU, and it need not have been this way. The path we've been put on beginning a decade ago, with little to no meaningful strategic vision, oversight or engagement with faculty, have now brought us here. In their analysis of what took place at Laurentian, Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk found that, for over a decade, "ill-conceived capital expansions, combined with weak governance oversight, led to Laurentian University's financial crisis." (CAUT, 2022). While we see no indications that we are heading the route of Laurentian, there are signals of comparison that we would be wise not to ignore. This partially led to our decision to move on a vote of No Confidence in our President and Chair of the Board of Governors. At the time of this report, we remain without a response, without answers and without transparency and collegial engagement in decision-making.

We were presented with a 4-point austerity plan by the VPAR over a month ago now, which we responded to in detail, largely informed by you, our members. We engaged with the senior administration in a spirit of full disclosure and transparency, requesting a Faculty Assembly to discuss these measures, which took place. We remain without answers as to what cost savings these proposals might result in nor how they are part of a strategic vision or plan. Some of the measures proposed would be in violation of our Collective Agreement, which SMUFU Executive is firmly committed to uphold.

It's been a hard year. It's been tiring. It's frustrating. SMUFU Executive is a team, and they deserve credit for the many meetings, long hours, lengthy debates and discussions. They have worked collegially, respectfully, with integrity and I am so thankful to have served among these colleagues as we work to represent you all to the best of our abilities. We have remained steadfast in our protection of our Collective Agreement in all aspects of our workplace, including at the URC and UAC. As I look towards the 2024-25 academic year, with a new SMUFU Executive beginning on May 1, I am certain that this team will also serve you well. We have new Grievance Co-Chairs in place, a Bargaining Team initiated and strength in our financial and labour relations oversight.

This coming academic year will be challenging as austerity measures will undoubtedly confront us. I urge us all to remain united in solidarity as members of SMUFU as the Employer will inevitably work to divide us along faculties. Remember, 'In Union there is strength' (Aesop).

CAUT (November 18, 2022) "Special Report on Laurentian: A damning account of mismanagement"

[https://www.caut.ca/node/12165#:~:text=The%20Special%20Report%20on%20Laurentian,\)%20on%20February%201%2C%202021.](https://www.caut.ca/node/12165#:~:text=The%20Special%20Report%20on%20Laurentian,)%20on%20February%201%2C%202021.)

Submitted by Cathy Conrad.