

# Office of the Vice-Provost, Faculty Relations: Winter Newsletter

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MARCH 2025

Warm greetings from the tail-end of winter. As the tenure and promotion case file review process wraps up and the approximately 80 submissions have been adjudicated, I am reminded of the importance of the work we do as faculty. The case files paint vivid pictures of faculty doing important work that has a meaningful impact on our students and those who benefit from our scholarship. What follows is an update on the annual collegial process and other activities coming out of my office.



## COLLEGIAL PROCESS UPDATES

The collegial process is a unique and special alternative to top down managerial decisions regarding job security (tenure), promotion and salary decisions. It recognizes the important role of faculty as subject area experts and relies on their willingness to serve on committees, prepare for meetings, engage in productive debate and exercise sound judgement. It is a time-consuming process, but well worth the effort.

The University Review Committee (URC) has completed the work of reviewing case files. This year there were 18 applications for renewal, 31 for tenure, and 70 for promotion. Departments, colleges, and the URC have met and the recommendations have been communicated to applicants, and passed on to the President for transmission to the Board of Governors for final approval.

This year, I observed a significant overall improvement in the case file submissions. Units and candidates clearly incorporated last year's feedback from the URC, and in particular, I noticed that the self-assessments were appropriately focused on demonstrating how the evidence provided in the file meets the relevant standard. This narrative is very useful for adjudicating committees, especially when the file is inspected by colleagues who are not experts in the discipline, as is often the case at the university level.

BE WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS

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# Collegial Process Updates Cont'd

The URC now turns its attention to reviewing the submissions from colleges regarding the standards for the new tenure track teaching stream, and the comments on the proposed changes to the university standards. Colleges should expect feedback starting in late April. Membership on the URC comes with a heavy workload with back-to-back full or half-day Friday meetings for extended periods of the year. Below, I list the members of the URC. If you have occasion, please thank them for their service.

Bishnu Acharya, Ralph Deters, Jason Perepelkin, Gordon Sarty, Lori Bradford, Egan Chernoff, Maha Kumaran, Marla Mickleborough, and Shelley Peacock.

The President's Review Committee (PRC) is just getting fired up. We begin the work of reviewing the recommendations from colleges for special salary increases (merit).

## New Dependent Travel Fund

**Please note that a new fund has been created to support travel for university business for faculty with dependent care responsibilities. The intent is to offset some of the additional cost incurred by caregivers when they travel for research. The fund is limited to \$30,000; faculty are eligible for up to \$2,000 per year. The application process and guidelines are being developed and more information will be posted here.**

**Stay tuned for more information, and save your receipts.**

## VPFR is hosting...

### Tenure & Promotion Event

**Date: May 22, 2025**

**Time: 4:00-5:30pm**

**Venue: The University Club**

### Department Head and Assistant Dean Appreciation Event

**Date: May 29, 2025**

**Time: 4:00-5:30pm**

**Venue: The University Club**

### Distinguished Professorship Gala

**Date: June 10, 2025**

**Time: 4:00-6:00pm**

**Venue: Convocation Hall**

## In other news,

Arising from new language in the collective agreement, search, tenure and promotion, and merit committees implemented a new entitlement for Indigenous faculty, or those engaged in Indigenous related work, to have an advocate visit with or make a submission to the relevant committee. Please see the guidelines [here](https://vpfaculty.usask.ca/documents/implementing-collective-agreement-guidelines.pdf) (https://vpfaculty.usask.ca/documents/implementing-collective-agreement-guidelines.pdf). I am most grateful for the pragmatic approach used by committees to incorporate this new provision into existing committee practices.

Also instigated by new language in the collective agreement, the new unconscious bias and anti-racism training for faculty participating on collegial process committees is well underway. Working together, our EDI consultants and the Office of the Vice Provost Indigenous Engagement created a custom-made training session for the collegial process at USask. This year, seven options for the session are offered and will provide training to 420 faculty members. The sessions are sold out and a wait-list has been established. So far, two sessions have run and the feedback is overwhelmingly positive. This is tough work; I am grateful to all those who participate.

To provide sufficient time to train all faculty, the training will not be mandatory until the 2026/2027 academic year. Next year (2025/2026), departments and colleges will be asked to identify alternative training options that faculty can use to meet the training requirements.

## Distinguished Professor Lecture Series

**Dr. Terry Wotherspoon**

**When: March 12, 2025**

**Time: 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM CST**

**Location: Convocation Hall**

**Dr. Vivian Ramsden**

**When: April 09, 2025**

**Time: 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM CST**

**Location: Convocation Hall**

## An appreciation for Department Heads and Assistant Deans

I am convinced that the department head (in departmentalized colleges) and the assistant dean (in non-departmentalized colleges) are two of the most difficult and important roles on campus. They require a careful balance of often competing priorities: they champion faculty accomplishments and are tasked with having difficult conversations with faculty when expectations are not met; they advocate for the department or unit and they must also work collaboratively with college leadership; they assign duties that are fair and sufficiently flexible to accommodate faculty preferences while protecting the academic programming needs of the department or unit.

This year my office has hosted a series of online information sessions. The Just In Time Series for Department Heads and Unit Leaders (JIT for DHULs – it's the best name I could come up with), explores the more challenging aspects of the role, such as chairing the tenure and promotion process, landing the right job candidate – tips for a successful faculty search, leading the merit process, assignment of duties, navigating accommodation and wellness requests. Online sessions are good for transmitting information, but the real fun comes when we can meet in-person.

**All department heads and unit leaders are invited for an end of year gathering at the University Club in the spring to raise a glass on May 29 from 4:00pm-5:30pm.**

## Townhalls, come one, come all...



### University Standards

Although input regarding the revisions to the university standards is primarily collected by department and college review committees and transmitted to the URC, there remains an opportunity for faculty to have direct input. On October 22, 2024 the first townhall was held and valuable feedback was voiced by many faculty members. The comments were shared with the URC. A second townhall is scheduled for May 7 from 10-11:30am. Please join me and have your say on the new standards for the teaching stream and the general revisions to the university standards.

### Instructors & Lecturers

On March 26, I will host a townhall to discuss the role of lectures and instructors and the new tenure track teaching stream. All are welcome.

### Blue Monday Faculty Brown Bag

On Monday, January 20 (officially the most depressing day of the year), over 60 faculty came together to discuss creeping workloads. The Blue Monday Faculty Brown Bag townhall was led by faculty and explored topics such as creeping workloads, realistic expectations, wellbeing, committee work, work and family balance and when to say no. For me the main takeaway was the importance of having mentors in place for junior faculty; and to better communicate the actual expectations (those enumerated in the standards), as opposed to the expectation creep that comes from water cooler gossip. There are also some real concerns about increased pressure on faculty to produce more research outcomes and teach more students with growing expectations, while levels of support are perceived to be diminishing.