USFA Committee on University Administrative Practice

First Report to the USFA Membership

March 2013

Executive Summary

The USFA Committee on University Administrative Practice was created in April 2012 to provide a forum for USFA members to monitor, discuss, and propose ideas to improve administrative practice at the University of Saskatchewan. 'Administrative practice,' for the purposes of the Committee and this report, means those practices undertaken by senior administration, by support staff, and by faculty under the heading of 'administrative duties,' all intended to manage and support the achievement of the University's core functions of research, teaching, and community engagement.

On 18 September 2012 the USFA sent an e-letter to all USFA members on behalf of the Committee on University Administrative Practice seeking input to guide our deliberations for the academic year 2012-13. One month later, on 19 October, the Committee hosted a talk by Dr. Claire Polster from the University of Regina at the USFA Fall General Meeting. Her talk was entitled *University Administration and Our Discontents: Toward a More Effective Faculty Response*. Between 13-20 December the Committee hosted four two-hour meetings with 31 faculty members from across most Colleges and Schools. These focus group style meetings were designed to assist the Committee in understanding how university administrative practices are affecting faculty's ability to perform their duties relative to carrying out the university's core purpose of research, teaching, and community engagement. Participants in these meetings included Department Heads and in-scope faculty of all ranks from Agriculture and Bioresources, Arts and Science, Education, Edwards School of Business, Engineering, Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, Law, Library, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy and Nutrition, School of Environment and Sustainability, and Veterinary Medicine.

Organized under three descriptive headings, the report discusses some of the *highest priority areas for improvement* in university administrative practice as identified from the meeting notes, responses to the USFA email to members, and the Committee's own deliberations. At times specific units are singled out in the sections that follow. It is important to understand that the Committee holds the talents, personalities and professionalism of individuals who work at the U of S in high regard. Critiques of units and personnel are directed at systemic issues and at times what are seen as an undesirable yet pervasive unit culture.

Impediments to Faculty Success as Engaged Teacher-Scholars

The Committee heard frequently about administrative practices that impede faculty success as engaged teacher-scholars. Research Administration as a centralized unit came up very often, as did Research Services within that larger unit. Advance due dates, the requirement of multiple signatures, regulatory preoccupation paired with a general support service deficit were all discussed in some detail. Challenges in building or re-fitting research facilities (e.g., research labs), and performance issues associated with the Facilities Management Division in carrying out this important research and teaching support, were discussed. Questions about the institutional use of overhead funds (e.g., linked to Tri-council operating grants, research contracts) were posed, and whether or not the funds are being allocated to directly support the performance of research by faculty. Great concern was expressed over the bureaucratic culture cultivated from the very first day a new faculty member is appointed at the U of S, with respect to a whole array of questionable applications for resources to conduct one's work and authority to supervise

students. Concerns were raised about the role of the College of Graduate Studies and Research (CGSR).

Concerns were also raised regarding the procedures set for grade submission, final exams, copyright compliance, the SEEQ teaching evaluation tool and its online administration. The dramatic cuts to discretionary funding used to support teaching, research and engagement at the level of academic units were also raised as a concern. Recognition of faculty work in 'outreach and engagement' in processes like salary review, progress toward tenure, and promotion was discussed as an area requiring enhancement. Faculty members suggested that the overlap between and volume of a variety of annual reporting processes is an ineffective use of their time. They also repeatedly pointed out that administrative and support staff culture has changed over time, to one where staff members do not seem to feel like they need to be helpful to faculty and support the faculty's central role in the core delivery of the university's public purpose.

From Centralized Administration Systems to Distributed Support Services

Faculty members argued that there is a general and growing misunderstanding about the roles, responsibilities and purpose of faculty members as opposed to administrative support staff members. There seems to be a shift in attitudes by administrative staff, seeing their role as one where they instruct faculty members to undertake work created in their administrative units, directed by senior university or college administrators, rather than support the work faculty do as the core functionaries of the university's public mandate for teaching, research and community engagement. A proliferation of administrative interference in the work of faculty was noted.

Department Heads are receiving new responsibilities for accountability without resources and authority to carry out the added duties. Distributed support staff at the unit level, where the productive work of the university is carried out by faculty, is declining. A general statement that was affirmed several times was that it is distributed (localized) support staff who are most able to assist faculty, heads, and students with administrative work, while it is centralized administrative staff that create new systems, regulations and associated tasks for faculty to undertake, diverting time and energy away from their performance of the university's public purpose.

Faculty recommended distributing the centralized graduate studies administrative functions into disciplinary colleges and discontinuing the CGSR.

Decentralized (distributed) Research Facilitators, at the Division and College levels, were praised as the kind of direct research support with whom faculty can cultivate supportive relationships, provided that the person in the job is the 'right fit.' Research support services should be decentralized to the College/School level to a greater extent, where support personnel can understand and support the disciplinary work of faculty, and be accountable to faculty bodies at the level of Departments, Divisions or Colleges.

Inverting the Pyramid – From Top-Down Paternalism to Operating the University as a "Real Community of Scholars"

The U of S suffers from ineffective deliberative processes between administration and faculty. University and college administrations should, to a greater extent, be supporting and

implementing agendas and resource prioritization set by faculty and students in relation to the public interest.

Input from academic units to the Third Integrated Plan was not sought to the extent that it had been for the Second Integrated Plan. Department Heads are receiving more directives from senior administrators which they must then push down onto faculty members. Faculty perceived that little to no input is being sought, and when it is the courtesy of communication and deliberative follow-up has been poor. Faculty members – who typically do not have direct administrative support – receive an increasing number of requests from administrative assistants to mid-level administrators or their staff in college or central administrations to meet about new initiatives coming forward from administrators, rather than from faculty councils.

Human Resources recently introduced a draft job description relating to core competencies for Department Heads that was inappropriately conceived and drafted. A new faculty mentorship system that does not seem to have originated from faculty was recently put in place that is administratively cumbersome for Department Heads and other faculty members, including those who are to be mentored. The previous system of mentorship 'was not broken.' The new system seems to have come from a central administrative office(s). Another example of an administrative solution in search of a problem is the new U of S Outreach and Engagement Office and staff complement.

Faculty members, including Heads, are concerned that Department Heads are playing less of a leadership role and more of an administrative and clerical function as time goes on. Heads have become the 'domestic labour' of the university.

Collegial decision-making processes are highly valued. What is troubling, however, is the perceived decline in the faculty's authority to act, where the faculty undertakes decision-making as a conclusion to consultation and discussion. It appears that agendas and decisions are being drafted by administrative units, and faculty are being approached through shallow consultation processes to touch up the margins. Faculty strongly believe that the connection between faculty-led agenda-setting, deliberative process, decision-making and authority to act must be reclaimed.

Discussion and Suggestions for Faculty Members

There are many specific issues relating to university administrative practice that have been identified by faculty members during our Committee's consultations and deliberations. These issues should be seen, as Polster put it in her address, "not merely as adding to our work as it is, but as fundamentally transforming what we do and what we are." Equally or more important are the structural and cultural issues that are diminishing the ability of faculty members to deliver on the core purpose of the public university in a way that maximizes benefit to students and the public. At its core, the university has for centuries been a relationship between faculty, students, and the public to advance society through research, teaching, learning and outreach. Administrators and administrative staff have assisted with that public purpose by playing a supporting role to productive interaction between faculty, students and the public. Over the past few decades, a remarkable shift has been occurring that should be arrested with expedience. Professor Doug Chivers, Chair of the U of S Faculty Association, conveyed this shift well in a recent letter to *The Saskatoon StarPhoenix* (18 January 2013): "Universities across Canada are

characterized by bloated, inefficient administrations that suck resources away from the academic agenda. The U of S is no exception." The same argument has been made for American universities in the 2011 book by Benjamin Ginsberg entitled *The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All-Administrative University and Why it Matters* (Oxford University Press).

In a letter to *The Saskatoon StarPhoenix* (14 December 2012, A15) Professor Satya Sharma from the U of S estimates the staggering extent to which personnel numbers in central and college administrations have increased, relative to faculty, since 1970 at this university. The numbers presented to University Council in October 2012, and discussed in the Provost's Report to Council in December, show a small decline in full-time academic staff numbers and a 16 percent rise in full-time non-academic staff numbers between 2002-03 and 2012-13, funded by the operating budget. The rise in salary costs over the same period was 40% for academic staff and 84% for non-academic staff. It is not simply the numbers that are concerning (i.e., the bloated administrations referred to by Chivers, Sharma, Ginsberg and supported by data presented by the Provost), but the fact that, according to faculty members, these non-academic staff may be steering the university structurally, functionally and culturally off-course. The nature of institutional relations is changing in ways that undermine faculty, student, and public interests.

It is also perhaps of some concern to faculty members that academic program prioritization is currently underway, buttressed by institutional financial pressures and a premise attributed to Robert Dickeson, conveyed in the Provost's Report to (University) Council in December, that: "Since academic programs are the bedrock of any university and are the real cost drivers, programs are where the re-evaluation must occur." Arguably, however, a considerable amount of administrative transformation should occur as a first order of priority before we begin to contemplate changes to academic programs that are indeed "the bedrock of any university." It falls upon faculty members to carefully consider the direction that the U of S has taken over past decades and where we want our institution to go right now and into the future. We have centuries of history behind us, though the relatively recent challenges of past decades are shifting that momentum quickly into a new pathway that threatens the role of the public university in society, not to mention the platform for our vocation here at the U of S.

The USFA Committee on University Administrative Practice recommends that faculty members initiate discussions of university administrative practice in focused ways at the level of their academic units and through their respective faculty councils. Added to unit and faculty council agendas these discussions can focus on the ways faculty members want administrators to act in order to facilitate faculty research, teaching, and outreach. Being heard seems a good first step. Together as academic units – and groups of units – faculty can ask for the support that they need. Faculty may also wish to discuss mechanisms for exercising stewardship over the incremental changes in administrative systems and staffing to minimize changes that do not contribute in optimal ways to the public purpose of the university. Faculty, as groups of colleagues, can articulate positions on specific examples or general features of administrative practice at the U of S. These positions might then be shared with other units and the USFA to generate a broader shared understanding across the university faculty of issues and prospective actions.

The USFA Committee on University Administrative Practice invites you to share your perspectives on anything in this report, missing from it, or suggestions for actions to explore with the Committee Chair at usfa@usaskfaculty.ca.

USFA Committee on University Administrative Practice

First Report to the USFA Membership

"Universities exist to seek new knowledge through research, and to teach the results of that research to students. University administrators exist to facilitate research, teaching and learning. Without the research and teaching, which is done by faculty, and the learning, which is done by students, administrators would have no reason to exist."

Michael Hayden, Professor Emeritus of History, University of Saskatchewan
- from *The Saskatoon StarPhoenix,* 5 February 2013, A6

The USFA Committee on University Administrative Practice was created in April 2012 to provide a forum for USFA members to monitor, discuss, and propose ideas to improve administrative practice at the University of Saskatchewan. 'Administrative practice,' for the purposes of the Committee and this report, means those practices undertaken by senior administration, by support staff, and by faculty under the heading of 'administrative duties,' all intended to manage and support the achievement of the University's core functions of research, teaching, and community engagement. The 2012-13 members of the Committee are: Julia Boughner, Roy Dobson, Donna Goodridge, George Mutwiri, Priscilla Settee, Anne Springer, Jerzy Szpunar, and Susan Whiting. Johanne Brassard and Ryan Walker are the USFA officers on the Committee, the latter serving as chair.

On 18 September 2012 the USFA sent an e-letter to all USFA members on behalf of the Committee on University Administrative Practice seeking input to guide our deliberations for the academic year 2012-13. One month later, on 19 October, the Committee hosted a talk by Dr. Claire Polster from the University of Regina at the USFA Fall General Meeting. Her talk was entitled *University Administration and Our Discontents: Toward a More Effective Faculty Response*. She shared insights from her research with academics, conveyed in part by the following quote from her talk:

"When I interviewed them, most academics characterized new administrative practices related to resource allocation, performance assessment, policy-making, and so on as burdens or obstructions that complicated or interfered with their work. If you imagine academics as dancers on a floor, they saw these practices as shackles or weights that administrators put on them, making it more difficult for them to do their work and/or to do it well. What I want to suggest is that rather than as weights that are put upon **us**, we see these practices instead as obstacles that are placed on the **dance floor**, which fundamentally alter the courses of action – or social relations – that constitute the dance itself as well as the role of the dancers. In other words, I suggest that we see these practices not merely as adding to our work as it is, but as fundamentally transforming what we do and what we are. I further suggest that because we neither recognize nor respond to the ways that these practices transform the academic dance, our actions help entrench and perpetuate new institutional relations that undermine our own and the public's interests. Put differently, we employ our energies and creativity in ways that are not simply ineffective, but counterproductive."

Between 13-20 December the Committee hosted four two-hour meetings with 31 faculty members from across most Colleges and Schools. These focus group style meetings were designed to assist the Committee in understanding how university administrative practices are affecting faculty's ability to perform their duties relative to carrying out the university's core purpose of research, teaching, and community engagement.[1] Participants in these meetings included Department Heads and in-scope faculty of all ranks from Agriculture and Bioresources, Arts and Science, Education, Edwards School of Business, Engineering, Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, Law, Library, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy and Nutrition, School of Environment and Sustainability, and Veterinary Medicine. Comprehensive notes were taken during each of these meetings.

Organized under three descriptive headings, the following represents some of the *highest priority areas for improvement* in university administrative practice as identified from the comprehensive meeting notes, responses to the USFA email to members in September, and the Committee's own deliberations. At times specific units are singled out in the sections that follow. It is important to understand that the Committee holds the talents, personalities and professionalism of individuals who work at the U of S in high regard. Critiques of units and personnel are directed at systemic issues and at times what are seen as an undesirable yet pervasive unit culture. Even in units subject to critique in this report, it is very important to appreciate that the individual talents and capacities of the people in those units is not being challenged. The report concludes with a brief discussion and suggestions for what faculty members can do to help improve administrative practice at the U of S.

1. Impediments to Faculty Success as Engaged Teacher-Scholars

The Committee was told that some faculty are opting to work through other universities instead of applying to hold grants at the U of S due to the complexities and aggravation associated with research administration processes here. This was noted as well in the USFA Chair's reflections on his discussions with new faculty (*Collectively Speaking* 15 October 2012). It is difficult to determine whether this is a common issue, and it would represent the most extreme of consequences stemming from impediments presented by our institution's administration of research. What is certain, however, is that many faculty members are speaking about impediments in research administration and support.

Faculty members expressed concern that the culture of the centralized Research Administration unit has become unfriendly and unhelpful. Instead of centralized research services, they argued for an enhancement of distributed localized research support that is discipline specific.

The advance due dates prescribed by Research Services were viewed by many as impractical and an impediment to faculty members producing the best possible grant application before agency

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[1] Invitees were chosen by the Committee to capture a range of academic ranks and academic units, socio-cultural diversity, and notable distinction (e.g., peer-nomination, award recipient) in at least one of the three pillars of the university's public function of teaching, research and outreach. None of the participants in the two-hour meetings were members of the USFA Executive Committee or Committee on University Administrative Practice, except to chair the meetings and take notes.

deadlines. Faculty were confounded by the university's preoccupation with multiple signatures from across campus for research grant applications. Numerous signatures are required at the Letter of Intent stage and again at the full proposal stage. Signatures from applicants, co-applicants, Department Heads, Deans, and on behalf of the Vice-President Research should not (all) be necessary unless specified by the granting agency and serve as an impediment to faculty members fulfilling the university's core purpose in research. The absurdity is compounded when numerous signatures are required for institutional small grants like applications to the U of S Publications Fund or President's SSHRC Fund. It is not the best use of faculty time to schedule meetings days or weeks in advance of internal deadlines with co-applicants, Heads and Deans, shuttling applications through campus mail or on foot, to have them signed by multiple parties.

Research facilities (e.g., research labs) are critical for research productivity among new and senior faculty members, yet faculty members highlighted how the Facilities Management Division in particular can be difficult to work with, costly (with questions raised about why multiple quotes for work are not required), and inefficient (timeliness was raised as a key issue). The proper and timely fitting of space and equipment for laboratories is a direct support to the research and teaching functions of the university, through the work of its faculty members. Too often, however, the U of S performance of this function, through Facilities Management Division, is being discussed as an impediment. The cumbersome, costly, untimely and bureaucratic process of research facility fitting or renovation was mentioned by senior faculty members and contrasted with earlier decades where the performance of the unit responsible for the university's physical plant was more nimble and directly supportive of faculty needs. These issues were also raised by new faculty in discussions with the USFA Chair as an impediment to getting their research programs up and running in a timely fashion upon appointment (*Collectively Speaking*, 15 October 2012).

Research overhead funds to the U of S linked to the grants secured by faculty members are supposed to off-set indirect costs of research (e.g., lab facilities renovation, technician support). Some faculty members are concerned that they are not able to follow the institution's use of those funds. Faculty want to ensure that the institutional overhead funds are used to support the performance of research by faculty, not simply going into the university's general accounts or directed at the further development of research administration systems and staff. For some, it was not clear how that overhead is being used to renovate lab facilities, employ technicians and provide direct support to faculty for research. It would appear to some faculty that overhead funds reside mostly at the central administrative level of university and college bureaucracy. Whether this is true or not would be easily dealt with by an exercise in financial transparency so that faculty can follow the use of institutional overhead dollars attributable – in aggregate – to their successful research grants.

An overly bureaucratic culture is seeded and cultivated from the very first day a new faculty member is appointed at the U of S. This is damaging over time to the collective institutional culture, where one might expect that a culture of enhanced performance in research, teaching and engagement would be the goal, and not a familiarity and exhaustion with institutional bureaucracy. When new faculty members arrive they must apply for start-up research funding, apply for equipment funding, apply to be a member of the College of Graduate Studies and Research (CGSR), and apply to the CGSR for funding available to new faculty for graduate student support. Faculty are often told that they will generally receive the funding they apply for

as a matter of course. Yet the application processes persist. It was pointed out by several faculty members that have held appointments at other universities that these applications are not a universal practice. It is a feature of the U of S, and not one that should be continued. Examples were provided of other universities that simply provide faculty with the start-up support they are eligible for as new faculty, eligibility to supervise graduate students as part of the offer of employment, and equipment to suit, so that they can start their productive research and teaching work from the very beginning of their appointment. Many of these supports are put in place prior to arrival so that new faculty members can begin their productive work toward the core function of the university from day one.

Faculty members noted that the Accountable Professional Expense Fund (APEF) amount is too low and should be set at a level sufficient to pay annual professional dues in associations (e.g., engineering, law, planning) and to fund attendance at one conference each year. Investment in the APEF for faculty is viewed as a direct support to research, teaching and engagement.

Control of scholarships by CGSR is viewed as an impediment to faculty research decision-making. Scholarship allocation is best done at disciplinary college or unit level. Differential funding for graduate students (e.g., thesis, non-thesis) is also an impediment to faculty research programs.

The five-day policy for submission of final grades was seen by many as virtually impossible to meet with large class sizes, a problem compounded in instances where exams for multiple classes taught by the same instructor are clustered in time. The five-day policy, if followed, can impact decision-making about the type and pedagogical quality of exam questions that faculty consider using. For example, computer scored multiple choice exams become virtually a necessity, even if one disagrees with their use on pedagogical grounds. Case-study based exams for medium to large class sizes cannot reasonably be graded in five days unless the faculty member has nothing else to do for the five days. Faculty work schedules rarely, if ever, permit exclusive attention to a single task for several consecutive full days. Discretionary funds at the level of academic units for faculty to hire student markers have been removed as a result of institutional budget cutbacks. These funds were a direct support to the faculty and university's core function of teaching.

Copyright issues are a significant current concern of faculty. Will resources be made for personnel to ensure that faculty teaching materials have all the necessary permissions and compliance? The common explanation with new university administrative systems, like copyright compliance, is that "it is just one short form or new review process and will only take a short time to complete." It is the persistent incremental creep of administrative tasks for faculty that is resulting in a loss of productive time for scholarship. No single new process or piece of paperwork is the culprit. It is the cumulative effect. Administrative systems and procedures need to be carefully audited to determine whether they are necessary for externally imposed reasons (e.g., compliance with government regulations) or to directly and tangibly improve teaching, research and engagement. Once these determinations are made, the next question is whether or not faculty members need to be the ones to carry out the tasks themselves or whether it can be done by distributed support staff at the unit level.

Faculty members noted that the Copyright Office is not undertaking direct support to faculty. Rather, the Office is instructing faculty how to do the work themselves. This is yet another

example of the general (d)evolution of 'support' service at the U of S, trending toward an absence of direct support to faculty for the peripheral administrative tasks connected to teaching and research. Instead, this support is replaced by investing in centralized offices that create new administrative systems that train faculty members to implement them, and spend the rest of the time monitoring compliance rather than assisting. As faculty members spend more time trying to overcome administrative impediments like these, they focus less of their time and expert capacity on the core purpose of the university in teaching, research and community engagement.

Faculty members shared examples of how disciplinary departments had experienced dramatic support staff reductions, sometimes by as much as half or more of the staff complement. What remains of the support personnel in academic units often seem so pre-occupied with new administrative work created by centralized administrative units that they are unable to provide direct support services to their faculty members. In some cases Department Heads are simply taking on clerical functions for their academic units. Faculty members expressed that it is becoming more challenging to create new ideas, teaching and research approaches, and stay abreast of their fields of knowledge because they have insufficient time to be reflective scholars.

The SEEQ teaching evaluation tool and its online administration were discussed by faculty members. The low student response rates that have become inherent with the online administration of SEEQ mean that faculty are spending time, repeatedly, reminding students to complete the questionnaire. Even with reminders, the response rates remain low, and particularly in comparison to response rates when administered in hard copy during class time. Furthermore, those who respond online have greater likelihood of being from one of two groups of students: 1) those that really liked the course and want to praise the instructor, or 2) those that really disliked the course and have an 'axe to grind.' The average student is perhaps less likely to take the time to respond online outside of class time. Faculty members noted too that the questionnaire itself contains too many questions, compounding the low response rate by students online outside of class time. Further compounding the problem is that students are enrolled in multiple courses, some of which have multiple instructors, with each course instructor reminding them to complete the online questionnaires in their own time outside of class. Simply put, teaching evaluations should be done during class time, in hard copy, using a questionnaire of appropriate content and length.

As discretionary funds available to academic units are eliminated through budget cuts, so too are the resources for innovative and experiential learning initiatives that in the past were most readily and simply supported at the level where they occur on the ground. The mismatch between the language and discourse of subsequent Integrated Plans favouring experiential learning, and the elimination of resources to support it at the ground level was raised with some frequency.

The policy/procedure of the office responsible for final examinations that requires a memo from the academic Department Head when a final exam is not required for a course is a misplaced responsibility for Heads, given that each faculty member is charged with course design to suit the learning objectives he or she sets for a course. Why would a faculty member, through her Department Head, be expected to *justify* a decision on whether or not to hold a final exam to someone scheduling final exams? The process seems inappropriate and inefficient at best, and at odds with the academic freedom of faculty members at worst.

Faculty members felt that the U of S does a poor job of recognizing the 'outreach and engagement' dimensions of knowledge creation and transfer. The processes in place to recognize faculty effectiveness in outreach and engagement (e.g., quality, frequency, impact factor) are insufficient. Faculty members expressed hope that we can change standards at the University, College and Department levels to enhance the recognition and rewards attached to outreach and engagement and the culture guiding university decision-making in this area of practice. Outreach and engagement reward mechanisms need to be better applied in processes like annual salary review, promotion and tenure.

Extension work remains a key priority of several colleges. The U of S Integrated Plan prioritizes Aboriginal engagement and general public outreach and engagement, but some faculty members question how the corporate model toward community-engaged research will intersect with the actual needs of the communities themselves. Communities often need applied assistance and extension service from trained experts, not community-based research. Furthermore, scholarly publications from community-engaged research may require a long commitment of time and applied practice, which can conflict with the rapid pace of publication desired for building institutional research-intensiveness. The university deliverables model may require significant revision if Saskatchewan continues to value the applied expertise and extension function of its largest university.

One participant explained how she had to prepare seven reports on personal performance during the past year, each in different formats to report to a donor, to central university administration, update the U of S Standard CV for special salary increase, report for purposes of a teaching release, update the institutional research database, and others. While university administrative staff monitor these processes and remind faculty to undertake them, the staff do not 'do the work' that would constitute actual 'support' work to faculty. An inventory and standardization of all the personnel file updates should be done, with a view to harmonizing these processes and assigning support staff to the clerical work involved.

Faculty members expressed that support staff culture has changed over time, generally speaking, to one where support staff members do not feel like they need to be helpful to faculty and support the faculty's central role in the core delivery of the university's public purpose. This is perceived as an impediment to faculty success in carrying out the core functions of the university. As one faculty member put it: "What ever happened to the 'May I help you?' disposition of support staff?"

2. From Centralized Administration Systems to Distributed Support Services

Faculty members noted that while there are competent and personable support staff members across the U of S, there is a general and growing misunderstanding about the roles, responsibilities and purpose of faculty members as opposed to administrative support staff members. There has been in past years a growing misallocation of resources to administrative staff positions that do not actually support the work of faculty members. There seems to be a growing shift in attitudes by administrative staff that see their role as one where they instruct

faculty members to undertake work created in their administrative units, directed by senior university or college administrators, rather than support the work faculty do as the core functionaries of the university's public mandate for teaching, research and community engagement.

Faculty members expressed that there has been a proliferation of administrative interference in the work of faculty rather than an increase in support of their efforts to carry out the core functions of the university. Others pointed out that too heavy a focus has been placed on administrative 'strategic' functions instead of administrative 'support' functions to faculty who give primary effect to the public purpose of the university. Yet at the same time as these centralized system and strategic positions proliferate, the core of support staff at the level of the academic unit – where faculty carry out the public functions of the university – is being cut back. The term 'centralized' here means those administrative staff positions that are not directly available to support work at the unit where teaching and research occurs. In contrast, 'distributed' support services are those that closely interact with and directly support the work of faculty members (e.g., department/program office staff, lab technicians).

Department Heads explained that they are being handed new responsibilities for accountability (e.g., copyright compliance, financial oversight of faculty accounts) without the resources (e.g., support staff) and authority to carry out the new duties. While the administrative tasks handed down to Heads and faculty members from centralized administrative units with growing staff complements "balloon," distributed support at the level of the academic unit is declining. Too often stories were shared about Heads contacting administrative offices like Financial Services to ask questions and being told to sign up for workshops and training. This is not support. Support is having distributed staff that can undertake this work on behalf of academic units, and are trained to do so. The clerical role of Heads appears to be increasing, as basic clerical support is lost through distributed support staff cuts over past years. Some lamented the loss of support staff that has served as the 'face of the Department' to undergraduate and graduate students with basic questions regarding programs and services. The 'norm' being created for new Heads to step into is discouraging and likely to cause problems with inducing faculty members to take on the role.

A general statement that was affirmed several times in meetings with faculty members was that it is distributed (localized) support staff that most ably assist faculty, Heads, and students with administrative work, while it is centralized administrative staff that create new systems, regulations and associated tasks for faculty to undertake, diverting time and energy away from their performance of the university's public purpose. There is a need to reposition the role of administrative staff in relation to faculty members at the University of Saskatchewan, and re-cast the "culture of support."

Historically, and in general, the principle seems to hold that when support staff is localized and accountable to faculty in a unit, they effectively work to reduce administrative burden on faculty members/Heads. When support staff does not have direct localized accountability to faculty in a unit, and is instead working out of and accountable to a centralized administrative unit (e.g., Dean's office, university administrative unit) they tend to create new systems and work to be handed down for faculty and Heads to undertake, rather than 'doing' the support work that would assist faculty.

Faculty members recommended distributing the now centralized graduate studies administrative functions into the disciplinary colleges and discontinuing the CGSR. The net effect would be better disciplinary fit between graduate studies functions and disciplinary colleges, their faculty and administration. It was pointed out that departments/disciplinary colleges do much of the substantive work already, send it on to the CGSR, and then wait. If any substantive matters arise, the CGSR typically needs to send the issue back to the disciplinary department or college to deal with. The functions of CGSR can be better undertaken at more localized levels in disciplinary colleges, with a shift in support and resources from CGSR to disciplinary colleges and departments to carry out the work. The case is made with greater force in the context of disappearing unit level support staff for graduate studies, while centralized demands rise. It appears that the human resources from CGSR could be better used in a distributed and decentralized manner to advance the research and education goals of faculty members in their disciplinary colleges.

Senior faculty members noted that over a period of 2-3 decades the university has seen comparatively little increase in faculty complement, with a decline in the number of distributed technicians and support staff attributable to budgetary cut-backs. At the same time the number of directors, assistant-, associate- and vice-deans, associate vice-presidents, vice-presidents and their centralized administrative staff is perceived to have risen remarkably in comparison. Yet the core productive purpose of the university – e.g., teaching and research – is carried out and assisted by those whose numbers have remained the same or dropped over time.

Decentralized (distributed) Research Facilitators, at the Division and College levels, were praised as the kind of direct research support with whom faculty can cultivate supportive relationships. At this localized scale, Research Facilitators are able to learn about faculty research programs in the unit and assist with research programs more directly. This is in contrast to the general gist of the sentiment among faculty members that centralized Research Administration is less responsive and supportive to their specific needs. As one person put it, succinctly, the Research Facilitators distributed through Divisions and Colleges go a long way toward making up for the perceived shortcomings of centralized Research Administration. Units that do not have Research Facilitators want to have one. But praise for Research Facilitators came with a caveat, and that is that the person in the job has to be the right fit. The potential for direct faculty support from Research Facilitators is high, though like with so many positions in the workforce, the fit of expertise to job description has to be there. With the right people in place, the distributed localized Research Facilitator position could become a central pillar in the research support and administration framework of the university. Localized Research Facilitators are valued when they are close enough to the discipline of a unit, and its faculty, that they can assist in specific and individualized ways.

Department-level research administrative support is miniscule and has been diminishing over time, compromising the ability of faculty members to manage their financial affairs with direct support. Faculty members are paying students to do administrative support tasks that should be done by unit-level support staff. It is not appropriate work experience for students, and they do not have the qualifications for it that career support staff would. Faculty need localized support for their research programs.

Research support services should be decentralized to the College/School level to a greater extent, where support personnel can understand and support the disciplinary work of faculty. This would also make research support services personnel accountable to disciplinary units rather than the Vice-President Research's office. As it stands currently, centralized research administration staff interacts with faculty less as support staff to the faculty's core function of research, and more as regulators working on behalf of a disconnected central administrative office. This does not help with the university's research productivity. Faculty members want a range of research 'support services' to draw upon to enhance their own research efforts.

As a general statement regarding research support and administration, and graduate studies: Re-allocate centralized staff to disciplinary colleges and units because it is there that productive disciplinary faculty-support staff relationships can be developed that advance research productivity and graduate student training.

With regard to teaching, faculty members noted that resources are needed at the department level for teaching support, from exam and hand-out printing, to teaching assistantship funding. The general principle expressed was that distributed resources and support on the ground at the unit level to help with teaching is needed, rather than mid-level administrative positions to provide centralized training workshops to faculty and create new compliance and evaluation systems. Faculty members remarked that the cost of a faculty member at a photocopier for an hour is high in comparison to the cost of clerical support staff, especially when the lost productivity in research, teaching and outreach during that time is accounted for.

3. Inverting the Pyramid – From Top-Down Paternalism to Operating the University as a "Real Community of Scholars"

The U of S suffers from ineffective deliberative processes between administration and faculty. University and college administrations should, to a greater extent, be supporting and implementing agendas and resource prioritization set by faculty and students in relation to the public interest. There is perceived to be a lack of real deliberative input and consultation on university systems involving faculty and Department Heads. Instead, faculty are brought together and told how things will occur and invited to make some comments for minor changes around the margins. Town halls are serving not as places where faculty set the academic agenda for the administration to help implement, but as question and answer periods or shallow discussion forums for decisions seemingly already made by administrators. Online surveys, with no clear purpose or sharing of results, are used by administrative units instead of open deliberative processes, to assess 'customer satisfaction.'

Input from academic units to the Third Integrated Plan was not designed into the planning process to the extent that it had been for the Second Integrated Plan. Department Heads are receiving more directives from senior administrators which they must then push down onto faculty members. There is little to no input. When administrators do solicit input and contributions of time from Heads and faculty for administrative projects, the courtesy of communication has suffered in some cases. Requests will be made for input and contributions of

time for new initiatives, though too often without feedback or deliberative follow-up with regard to the outcome from efforts expended by Heads and faculty.

Faculty members – who typically do not have direct administrative support – receive an increasing number of requests from administrative assistants to mid-level administrators or their staff in college or central administrations to schedule meetings for new initiatives invented in administrative offices, not faculty councils. In order to be undertaken the initiatives require a commitment of time by faculty members, something simply taken for granted. Faculty members, at individual or unit levels, who undertake the research, teaching and engagement functions of the university, are best able to determine how to direct new initiatives, when needed, to enhance the execution of their vocation. Administrative support might then be needed to assist faculty in carrying out the work.

A job description relating to core competencies for Department Heads was inappropriately conceived and drafted by Human Resources recently. Heads have the same letter of appointment as other faculty members in their units, focused on teaching, research, public service and administration. The job description drafted by Human Resources seemed to neglect that fact and included a "ballooning" of roles and responsibilities beyond what Heads are expected by their faculty peers to be doing and the history of the headship role. Heads explained that they would like clarity around their added roles and responsibilities, though it should be derived from a faculty-led process that creates a list of tasks which Heads undertake or should undertake to support the productive work of faculty members. This should then be conveyed to Human Resources for discussion.

Faculty members, including Heads, conveyed that Department Heads are playing less of a leadership role and more of an administrative and clerical function as time goes on. This is related to a lack of localized administrative support staff, and the proliferation of administrative systems on campus, with a decline in the extent to which faculty and academic units meaningfully set the academic agenda for the university. Heads have become the 'domestic labour' of the university.

The new faculty mentorship system put in place recently involves setting up a committee, deriving a research plan with new faculty, and setting formal meetings and processes in place for a period time. The system is administratively cumbersome for Department Heads and other faculty members, including those who are to be mentored. New faculty want direct mentorship that is driven by personal fit and a culture of collegial mutual support, not a new administratively heavy process for new and senior faculty to labour through together. The previous system of mentorship worked well and 'was not broken.' The new mentorship approach is time-consuming in bureaucratic and procedural ways that do not assure any higher standard of quality in the outcome for new faculty. The new process does not seem to have originated from faculty in general, but instead from a central administrative office(s).

Another example of an administrative solution in search of a problem that was discussed by some faculty members was the new U of S Outreach and Engagement Office and staff complement. Faculty members pointed out how outreach and engagement happens in a lot of small and continuous ways, and that it is by and large done by faculty members. Building the right incentive and reward structure for faculty efforts in outreach and engagement may be a better tool

for enhancing the university's performance in this part of its public mandate than creating new centralized administrative systems, facilities and staff complements.

Collegial decision-making processes are highly valued by faculty, and are in keeping with the centuries old governance model of western universities. What is troubling, however, is the perceived decline in the faculty's authority to act, where the faculty undertakes decision-making as a conclusion to consultation and discussion. Instead it appears that agendas and decisions are being drafted by administrative units, and faculty are then being approached through shallow consultation processes to touch up the margins. The connection between faculty-led agenda-setting, deliberative process, decision-making and authority to act needs to be reclaimed.

Senior faculty members remarked that new faculty members are learning and normalizing the institutional culture as it currently exists, and that the current culture is not one that faculty wish to normalize (e.g., stressful, bureaucratic, growing corporate culture driven by centralized and top-down decision-making). Faculty members have their work cut out for them if they wish to reclaim their place, held for centuries, as the legitimate authority – in partnership with students and the community – over the substance and core public functions of the university.

4. Discussion and Suggestions for Faculty Members

There are many specific issues relating to university administrative practice that have been identified by faculty members during our Committee's consultations and deliberations. These issues should be seen, as Claire Polster put it in her talk, "not merely as adding to our work as it is, but as fundamentally transforming what we do and what we are." Equally or more important are the structural and cultural issues that are diminishing the ability of faculty members to deliver on the core purpose of the public university in a way that maximizes benefit to students and the public. At its core, the university has for centuries been a relationship between faculty, students, and the public to advance society through research, teaching, learning and outreach. Administrators and administrative staff have assisted with that public purpose by playing a supporting role to productive interaction between faculty, students and the public. Over the past few decades, a remarkable shift has been occurring that should be arrested with expedience. Professor Doug Chivers, Chair of the U of S Faculty Association, conveyed this shift well in a recent letter to *The Saskatoon StarPhoenix* (18 January 2013): "Universities across Canada are characterized by bloated, inefficient administrations that suck resources away from the academic agenda. The U of S is no exception." The same argument has been made for American universities in the 2011 book by Benjamin Ginsberg entitled *The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All-Administrative University and Why it Matters* (Oxford University Press).

In a recent letter to *The Saskatoon StarPhoenix* (14 December 2012, A15) Professor Satya Sharma from the U of S estimates the staggering extent to which personnel numbers in central and college administrations have increased, relative to faculty, since 1970 at this university. The numbers presented to University Council in October 2012, and discussed in the Provost's Report to Council in December, show a small decline in full-time academic staff numbers and a 16 percent rise in full-time non-academic staff numbers between 2002-03 and 2012-13, funded by the operating budget. The rise in salary costs over the same period was 40% for academic staff

and 84% for non-academic staff. It is not simply the numbers that are concerning (i.e., the bloated administrations referred to by Chivers, Sharma, Ginsberg and supported by data presented by the Provost), but the fact that, according to faculty members, these non-academic staff may be steering the university structurally, functionally and culturally off-course. The nature of institutional relations is changing in ways that undermine faculty, student, and public interests.

It is also perhaps of some concern to faculty members that academic program prioritization is currently underway, buttressed by institutional financial pressures and a premise attributed to Robert Dickeson, conveyed in the Provost's Report to (University) Council in December, that: "Since academic programs are the bedrock of any university and are the real cost drivers, programs are where the re-evaluation must occur." Arguably, however, a considerable amount of administrative transformation should occur as a first order of priority before we begin to contemplate changes to academic programs that are indeed "the bedrock of any university." It falls upon faculty members to carefully consider the direction that the U of S has taken over past decades and where we want our institution to go right now and into the future. We have centuries of history behind us, though the relatively recent challenges of past decades are shifting that momentum quickly into a new pathway that threatens the role of the public university in society, not to mention the platform for our vocation here at the U of S.

The USFA Committee on University Administrative Practice recommends that faculty members initiate discussions of university administrative practice in focused ways at the level of their academic units and through their respective faculty councils. Added to unit and faculty council agendas these discussions can focus on the ways faculty members want administrators to act in order to facilitate faculty research, teaching, and outreach. Being heard seems a good first step. Together as academic units – and groups of units – faculty can ask for the support that they need. Faculty may also wish to discuss mechanisms for exercising stewardship over the incremental changes in administrative systems and staffing to minimize changes that do not contribute in optimal ways to the public purpose of the university. Faculty, as groups of colleagues, can articulate positions on specific examples or general features of administrative practice at the U of S. These positions might then be shared with other units and the USFA to generate a broader shared understanding across the university faculty of issues and prospective actions.

The USFA Committee on University Administrative Practice invites you to share your perspectives on anything in this report, missing from it, or suggestions for actions to explore with the Committee Chair at usfa@usaskfaculty.ca.