

Vox means “Voice.” Where is Yours?

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This issue of VOX brings to a close my three-year stint as editor. Those three years have seen VOX publish on a range of topics of relevance to a broad faculty audience. While most articles have been very positively received, in some cases certain critical perspectives were raised, usually in private emails. Two points to make about this. First, sometimes readers fail to understand that these articles are opinion pieces of the authors, and do not necessarily represent the views of the USFA or me as editor. Second, readers rarely reach out to offer an alternative perspective in print. While the first issue of misdirected criticism is an inevitable aspect of publishing, it is the second that I find most disconcerting. If “vox” means “voice,” where is yours?

In such a large institution as our university it is extremely difficult to share information and perspectives about goings-on. Even at the level of smaller governance units, colleges for instance, or University Council, active participation is muted. While it is fair to say that providing credit for salary review and tenure and promotion for involvement in governance makes sense, it seems that such participation has become little more than signing attendance

sheets, a box-checking exercise for relevant CV categories. What I do not see much of these days is the passion that faculty brought to university governance back when it was that passion, and not a CV category, that brought members out in droves to express themselves, argue, and challenge each other and senior administrators. This is where we heard about issues affecting various units, that allowed us to appreciate that we were not alone in our own unit in dealing with these. The space for active conversations was created, contributing to a pan-faculty zeitgeist that inspired a collective sense of belonging, a ‘we are all in this together’ mentality, despite internecine disagreements.

When I took on the editorship of VOX it had been languishing for a while, with a somewhat sporadic publishing history. The number of submissions was low and in some cases a handful of voices appeared repeatedly (and while this is never good for a publication, at least these faculty members were passionate about the views they expressed). I am happy that we have managed to produce an issue for most months of active readership, but I regret the significant number

of faculty to whom I reached out that declined to submit. Busy, yes, we all are of course, and understandable. What really bothered me, however, was the number of individuals who expressed fear in writing for VOX, that somehow they would be viewed negatively, their opinions unpopular, and worse that their comments would be held against them in collegial processes. After some forty years at U of S, and untold numbers of collegial process and decision-making meetings, I can submit that while yes, sometimes faculty and administrators make comments about a person’s record that reflect their distaste of that person, I have never seen a faculty member decline tenure, promotion, or salary increase because of their perceived personality, or an article written in VOX. Some readers will no doubt disagree with me, and will reference incidents from the past that they heard about, but I stand on my assertion that there is no reason to fear voicing your opinions and perspectives.

As our university continues to create a climate that pits each of us against each other (through, for instance, merit processes), and unit against unit in competing for scarce

resources, we should appreciate that this serves only the interests of senior administrators, not ours as a faculty and not us as individuals. We must have venues to share our views and experiences, to inculcate a sense of solidarity on the shop floor. VOX exists almost solely now as a

means to do this. It is our voice. It is your voice. We need to hear from you.

Shout Out: I want to express my gratitude to Johanne Brassard for all the work she has done for VOX

and in helping me to produce these issues in a timely manner. And I wish to commend the members of the USFA Executive over the years who never once sought to interfere in the editorial process.

VOX is published periodically on demand as a forum for the expression of opinions of members of the USFA on topics of interest to the membership. Submissions to be considered for publication may be sent to the USFA office or usfa@usaskfaculty.ca to the attention of **VOX**, or the Editor, Jim Waldram, at j.waldram@usask.ca.

Articles should be about 1000 words. Letters to the Editor, commenting on previous articles, should not exceed 200 words. The Editor reserves the right to determine the suitability of all articles and letters for publication in **VOX**.

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