



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

I first became president of APSA in 2019, and in my president's message that year, I talked about the theme of new beginnings. Not only was it my first year as president, but it was also Andrew's first year as our executive director, Lakshmi's first year as our communications coordinator, and Angela's responsibilities were expanded into the role of member services coordinator.

My vision was one of new beginnings with a focus on communications. Our relationship with the University was poor, especially because on many items relating to APSA and our members, the University was opaque instead of transparent. My goal at the time was to improve communications with you: to focus on our association's three-part role of advocating, negotiating, and educating on behalf of our members.

We were beginning to see success, to build momentum, and to be a better representative of our membership... and then COVID hit. Just as you had to pivot in your day-to-day roles, APSA as an association had to pivot.

We have spent 2022 "coming back from COVID," and we can look back on our actions with pride. No one expects or can

prepare for a pandemic; however, our organization, our volunteers, and each and every one of you in your day-to-day roles can look back on what we had to deal with and what we accomplished with satisfaction.

I will be stepping down from the president's role at the end of this year. I see our organization as being in a better place than it was in 2019 – more representative of our role as a "member-driven association". While I am disappointed that COVID slowed or interrupted many of the things we were trying to achieve, I feel confident that we will continue to improve on educating, negotiating, and advocating on behalf of administrative professionals at SFU.

Looking Back at 2022

Over the course of 2022, we have started to have productive conversations with the University administration, including Yabome Gilpin-Jackson, the VPPEI and SFU president Joy Johnson. Early in the year, as part of the welcome/introductory meeting with the VPPEI, I said the following to her:

"I'm comfortable using letter grades to describe our relationship. A year ago, I would rate the relationship an "F".... today, while our relationship has improved, it has only improved to a "D" grade. Why is that, and why has it not improved further?"

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Without breaking the confidence of my conversation with Yabome, I think it's worthwhile to explain to APSA members why I say that. We have several important issues that remain outstanding, to the point that they are at arbitration. These include:

- An arbitration on what we can negotiate during bargaining. Our negotiating committee cannot develop topics, and bargaining cannot commence until this issue is resolved.
- An Employment Standards Act complaint on the definition of manager vs. non-manager and how that extra time/overtime is compensated for APSA members. Many APSA members are still working exorbitant hours without any compensation in terms of salary or time off.
- An arbitration relating to the Joint Compensation Review Committee (JCRC) regarding market surveys and how market survey data is analyzed. While the University has acknowledged that APSA staff are under-compensated, we can't quantify the amount of under-compensation without this work.

That conversation with the VPPEI was in May, and as of today, I would say there are signs of improvement in the relationship.

On bullying and harassment, which remains a troublesome issue in a number of University departments, the University has said they will rework the policy and consult with APSA and other employee groups on that matter. Whether that work is consultative and collaborative, as opposed to the University merely mandating what they want, remains to be seen.

While the JCRC arbitration remains outstanding, the University has made some positive statements about compensation philosophy and engaging in future market surveys. Again, what remains to be seen is if this is a collaborative process or not.

On hybrid work, the University was, in fact, consultative and collaborative. Certainly, APSA did not get everything it wanted out of the University's draft hybrid work protocols, especially concerning the uniform application of this policy across the institution. Still, the process itself was much more collaborative than anything I've seen over the last several years.

We're "not there" with our relationship, just like we're not yet "100% back" from COVID. There are still issues where we seem to slide backwards (some of which have been detailed in APSA's monthly newsletter), we still have concerns about the level of transparency, and we still haven't reached the level of trustworthiness I would hope for. Still, there is reason to be just a little optimistic.

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Looking Forward to 2023

At our upcoming December board meeting, the APSA directors will elect a new president and executive. I will leave much of our future direction to the individuals entering those roles, but I do want to focus on advocacy and how APSA will interact with many of the changes coming to the University.

The role of VPPEI will continue to be fleshed out, including responsibilities related to EDI and reconciliation. SFU's President Joy Johnson continues with her vision concerning "SFU: What's Next", and the University is moving down a path to change how budgets and university finances are managed – shifting more of the focus and responsibility to a provost-centred model.

Advocacy for APSA members, their roles, and the financial and operational support for these roles will become more and more important. As your administrative and professional organization, APSA will continue to advocate for you on these topics. However, it is my experience that the University responds best when they hear from us both as an association and as individuals.

I strongly encourage you to provide feedback whenever you see an opportunity to participate in an SFU: What's Next survey, an EDI survey, a budget consultation survey, etc. The University responds one way to APSA, saying, "our members need this" it can often respond even better if it receives 1,000 pieces of feedback on the topic from individually engaged APSA members.

Furthermore, if you find that the workload you voluntarily took under COVID has not gone back to normal, or your department remains not fully staffed, etc., please let your supervisor know. If you are the supervisor in this situation, let your director know. In both cases, let APSA know so we have an understanding of the work environment our members face. The most important thing in addressing workplace challenges is to let people know they exist.

Thank you for the opportunity to have been president of APSA. It was a challenge I enjoyed immensely, and I remain grateful for the trust all of you have placed in me, the board, and the APSA staff.

David Agosti - President, APSA