

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

“APSA will need to continue to adapt and strengthen so that we grow increasingly robust and better equipped to safeguard jobs, improve workplace policies and ensure you feel engaged, listened to and empowered to determine APSA’s path moving forward.”

I It has been a tough year for APSA, with much of our attention being directed towards the strategic choices made by the current SFU administration to lay off approximately 55 permanent APSA members. As such, I would like to begin by recognising the service of those APSA colleagues who lost their jobs and the dozens more of our non-APSA colleagues who have also been affected. They were valued members of the SFU community, and we will continue to feel their absence.

I want to express my gratitude to those who remain for your resilience, ingenuity and resolve. Many of you shouldered increased workloads while feeling like you have less job security. We have seen an uptick in bullying & harassment complaints and issues with burnout – not to mention the struggles associated with the high cost of living in BC and with the global issues that have affected many of us deeply. Despite these immense challenges, you continue to carry out your job with professionalism and dedication, upholding the values that make your

contributions as a public servant in this province so incredibly valuable. You are an expert in your field, and you deserve to feel safe and appreciated while you are employed at SFU.

I also extend my deepest appreciation and admiration to our dedicated APSA staff and volunteers. Your care and compassion have been a beacon of comfort for many during these turbulent times. You have tirelessly endeavoured to secure the best possible outcomes for our laid-off members, ensuring they received the support they merit and the maximum compensation we could negotiate. Your efforts and emotional labour exemplify the very spirit of APSA, and for that, we are all profoundly grateful.

Undoubtedly, there are stark challenges facing higher education institutions across Canada, and the expertise of APSA members will be influential in helping SFU find solutions to these realities. Whilst SFU senior leadership cannot give any guarantees at this time, they have said we are now

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in a “steady state” and are not expecting any further mass layoffs in the new year.

Despite the layoffs and associated issues, APSA-SFU relations have improved in other areas, namely concerning individual advocacy cases with Labour Relations and our monthly liaison with the VPPEI. We are also optimistic about the rekindling of the Joint University Association Committee (JUAC), which is the forum for APSA and SFU to negotiate policies and other matters that pertain to our employment and that are not part of our salary and benefits bargaining (e.g. the AD-10 policies in our collective agreement). This committee has not sat since 2018, and so this marks a significant milestone that we hope can be used to secure incremental improvements to your professional lives.

It will also be valuable to strengthen and rebuild our relationships with fellow labour groups on campus — Poly Party, CUPE and SFUFA — as well as with our sister organisations, the PEA at UVic and AAPS at UBC. Building strong alliances is crucial as we navigate common challenges. By collaborating with internal and external labour groups, we can more effectively

advocate for our shared interests and work towards a more respectful and supportive work environment for everyone. Progress has been made in this regard, too, with the Employee Joint Pension Committee (EJPC) returning from a hiatus — this is the forum where Poly Party, CUPE and APSA collaborate on items concerning the pension plan we jointly share.

With more precarity and uncertainty in the years ahead likely, it will be important that we are all prepared for whatever tests may arise. APSA will need to continue to adapt and strengthen so that we grow increasingly robust and better equipped to safeguard jobs, improve workplace policies and ensure you feel engaged, listened to and empowered to determine APSA’s path moving forward. APSA must meet you where you are at, and this includes members not currently in need of individual advocacy support but who have an appetite for professional development and networking opportunities, too. Therefore, I am pleased to share that the APSA board has voted to approve the development of a three-year strategic plan with work beginning in Spring 2025.

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There have been other positive developments over the past year, including:

- The return of the APSA social event this summer, which saw a turnout of 156 members, and the continuation of the monthly conversations with the APSA board and staff series held at every campus — we plan to look into virtual offerings, too, next year.
- Our new Basic Agreement with SFU was negotiated, approved by you (98% of the 634 who voted), and ratified. This is the primary document that recognises and outlines our relationship with SFU and also helped pave the way to getting the JUAC back up and running.
- Three new internal APSA policies were developed, and we have identified the gaps where more documents need to be implemented — all with the aim of helping us become a nimbler organisation and hopefully safeguarding against any potential internal organisational issues.
- APSA donated to the SFU Food Pantry from our community engagement fund, and some of our board members volunteered with them, too.
- The new Pension Trust Agreement was reviewed, updated and approved. APSA and Pension Advisory Committee (PAC) member Alyson Biro was also reappointed as our APSA pension trustee for a new three-year term (December 1, 2024, to November 30, 2027).
- We also held 11 professional development workshops that were very well attended.
- Staff member Tracey Ferris was promoted to our Senior Labour Relations Officer position, taking over from Angela Vass, who left for pastures new at the BC Nurses' Union. Aicha Etrew was also recently hired as our new Member Services Officer.

Before concluding, I would like to pay special thanks to all of our staff; Aicha Etrew (Member Services Officer), Tracey Ferris (Senior Member Services Officer), Lakshmi Gosyne (Associate Director, Communications) and Andrew Boden (Executive Director); as well as to our past and outgoing board members; Jeff Bryer, Phil Cunningham, Matthew Menzies and Jill Sutherland. I am excited to welcome our new and

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returning board members, Nicole Manson, Tess Williams, Patrick McClarty, and Ellen Yap.

In closing, I want to remind you that we all have an equal stake in APSA, and it is all of our dues that make what we do possible. We are an association built on mutual respect and support with a shared commitment to professionalism and excellence. Our strength lies in our unity and collective determination to make SFU the best it can be while creating a better working environment for all on campus. Together, we will confront the challenges we have before us and emerge stronger than ever.

Thank you,

Ben Boyle
President, APSA