



VIUFA Report on Professional Development and Scholarly Activity
March 2022
Prepared by Dan Baker

As the PDSA representative for VIUFA, I participated in a number of activities, including attended a Zoom™ meeting on the 11th and 12th of March 2022. Some of the key topics this year and addressed at this meeting were the following:

1. Survey and explore administrative control and exploitation of PD funds to develop model language for bargaining.
 - a. How the funds spent?
 - b. Are faculty managing these funds or is this being managed (and approved) solely by administration?
 - c. Does the management of the fund accurately reflect how it is to be managed in our local agreements?
 - d. Did the parameters of the fund change in any way due to the pandemic?
2. Survey allocation of Common and Local funds to develop model language for bargaining.
 - a. Is there a clear understanding of the difference between the common and local funds?
 - b. Are the systems in place effective in ensuring that common funds get spent first, as these get clawed back if unused?
 - c. Can this funding be combined with local funds to create a 'true picture' of the total PD funding?
3. Continue to monitor applied research, looking at workload, structure and activities in relation to our Collective Agreements.
 - a. How is research supported?
4. Propose a motion that FPSE advocate for the recognition and acknowledgement of research and applied research done by our members by PSEA and the provincial government.

Summary of progress:

- 1. Survey and explore administrative control and exploitation of PD funds to develop model language for bargaining.**

A document was created in 2015 to describe the policies of those locals that actually have representation in the area of Professional Development and Scholarly Activities, which is

approximately 20 of 24 locals. This exercise was to create an update on those policies. The topics under the previous document were the following:

- Distinct Scholarly Activity Language
- PD Leaves
- PD Funds
- PD Time
- Non-Regular Access to PD
- PD Committees and Structures

Overall, VIU seems to be doing well comparatively in terms of resources allocated to faculty - both regular teaching and non-teaching - and amount of oversight on spending and applying for PD. In particular, VIU's practice of allowing cash payout (granted with a 25% loss of funds) appeared unique among the institutions, and ensured that little institutionally applied money available directly to faculty (i.e., the now \$1200 per fiscal year) was rarely lost or resorbed. In addition, the number of internal funds available which has increased under the current administration also appeared to be much greater than most of the institutions covered by the FPSE umbrella. The process for applying and spending PD funds also seemed to be more streamline at VIU (at least for PD funds for individuals). New awards such as Time awards have greater administrative demands for applying, but did not seem particularly onerous compared to those at comparative institutions in BC. Finally, Professional Development Leave at VIU was among the best opportunities amongst the group, although the amount of variability between institutions made the comparison challenging in some case.

Within those institutions administered by FPSE, two main concerns were noted. The first was that in many cases there was either an increase in administrative control of PD funds, or the control was in the hands of those who had conflicting priorities such as budget reduction or resource allocation (for example, Deans), providing opportunities for restriction in access to funds. The second was that there was no consistency between institutions in the language in the collective agreement regarding what PD funds look like or how they were applied, and this was seen to provide an obstacle in creating acknowledgement of scholarly activities by the PSEA as is believed to be related to the motion proposed below.

2. Survey allocation of Common and Local funds to develop model language for bargaining.

The monikers of "Common" and "Local" funds was determined to be less often than not amongst the institutions surveyed. This is actually more important than at first glance, as in some cases, these two pools of money may be treated very differently, with some being able to be rolled over between fiscal years, and other not, instead potentially being resorbed by the institution. While VIU does not use the "Common" and "Local" terms, there is separation in allocation with \$1200 per year going directly to union members, and other monies being held for various award-based opportunities, such as assisted leave and the Time awards. Of particular interest is that while the \$1200 per year is guaranteed as part of the collective

agreement, application for leave and the Time awards are assessed by a committee with a make-up that at VIU **is regulated** by the collective agreement (when we negotiated Time awards and Assisted Leaves, it was made sure that those funds were controlled by a committee made largely of VIUFA colleagues, see Article 12.4.10.1.1.), and thus is much less likely to be subject to greater administrative control as demand increase. Consequently, our collective agreement language may be useful to other institutions in the sector.

Overall, there was acknowledgement within the committee that, as with administrative control and allocation, a lack of consistency within the language of PD funding in the collective bargaining is likely to provide obstacles to having PD and scholarly activities recognized by the Provincial government.

3. Continue to monitor applied research, looking at workload, structure and activities in relation to our Collective Agreements.

The general consensus through discussion of information shared by each local associated with the workload associated with research, whether applied or not, was one of significant concern. There has been a significant trend at many institutions to push for their faculty to perform research. Many have an administrative director (or the like) to manage these projects. Our institutions are actively using these projects for public relations and recruitment purposes. Despite the valuing of this area, very few of us have clear language in our Collective Agreements regarding workload and release related to these activities. Release decisions are ad hoc at best, and many faculty members engaged in research activities essentially do so as an additional (and under-recognized) part their job off the side of their desk. Many faculty do their research while on their vacation time and weekends. Course instruction leaves few options for vacation switching or hiring replacements.

While the situation at VIU is perhaps not as bad as at some institutions, there are clear inequities between some of the support offered to individuals, Departments and Faculties, that illustrate the need for better language in the collective agreement that assesses the institutional benefits and individual costs of doing research. Academic freedom in terms of subject material, acknowledgement and consideration of contribution (both financial and otherwise), and processes associated with distribution of funds are all topics for which language could be created that could be widely applied to collective agreements without significant needs for local changes. This conversation led to the development of the resolution below.

4. Propose a motion that FPSE advocate for the recognition and acknowledgement of research and applied research done by our members by PSEA and the provincial government.

We will propose the following resolution at the annual general meeting:

Resolution

Preamble

1. **because many of our member institutions have management positions and structures directed at increasing research initiatives,**
2. **because there is very little or no clear language in many of our Collective Agreements regarding research work,**
3. **because faculty release for research is being allocated in an ad hoc manner at many of our institutions and performed by faculty in addition to their regular work duties,**
4. **because gainful research is being used by our institutions for public relations and financial reasons rather than for the merits of scholarship.**

(Wording may be slightly altered) Be it resolved that FPSE advocate for our members to have research and applied research recognized and acknowledged by the PSEA and the provincial government.

Other notes:

At our meeting in March, we also discussed the results of the draft from the Committee on Committees. As a result, we agreed to submit the following related feedback to the points made by the COC (listed below) related to the biggest changes.

1. A change of the quorum to the percentage of those member locals who have Committee representation.
 - **Support:** We have a few locals with zero PD funds and therefore do not have reps which makes achieving quorum for our Committee especially difficult
2. Chairs are to be elected for 2 year terms at the Spring meeting.
 - **Support:** This seems to make sense and provide consistency
3. One face-to-face meeting and one virtual meeting per year at minimum.
 - **Support:** This makes sense and reduces costs, while still allows for the networking and idea generation that can only be achieved in person
4. Two tiers of Committees into *Operational* and *Select* Standing Committees. We would be a Select Standing Committee and lose a staff rep.
 - We would still be supported by Sabrina Cho for logistics and communication as well as an Exec rep for communication and questions about FPSE itself.
 - **Feedback:** We would propose that we continue have access to a staff rep for informational needs as a resource. They would not need to attend meetings, but the Chair could still have access when needed.
5. Have the Education Policy Committee merge with our Committee.
 - **Support:** this amalgamation generally makes sense and we will not lose anything that would negatively affect the larger FPSE mission and goals.

Perspectives:

As a part of this committee, I was quite surprised by the inconstant language, practice and administration associated with funding of professional development and scholarly activities, although in hindsight I probably shouldn't have been. It is clearly indicative of evolution of these opportunities in isolation - in other words, lack of a clear line of communication during bargaining between locals. However, there is no *a priori* reason to believe that a one size fits all approach would work, as the variability in the institutions grouped here is substantial.

That said, it did seem that there may be some synergies that would strengthen our bargaining positions with regards to institutional recognition that activities focused on research and applied research create an atmosphere that provides students with a better learning experiences, relatively independent of what that research goal is (that is, whether it is focused on knowledge gathering, teaching expertise, discovery or application). In other words, language allowing institutions to acknowledge these activities that could be applied more generally to collective agreements may avoid conflicts later as institutions gain significant benefits from activities done largely without recompense by faculty.