



VIUFA Vice President Report
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I was elected into the VP position in April, 2022, and have been grateful to spend this year working with the VIUFA executive and serving our members. The VP portfolio is not as well-defined as other portfolios, which means VPs can support a variety of portfolios depending on where support is needed, as well as the skills and interests of the VP. For this reason, I spent much of the year supporting a variety of portfolios, learning about union business in general and the collective agreement, and supporting general communication strategies.

Communications

Communications actually sits in the VP portfolio, and one of the objectives I set for this year was to find a way to streamline our communications with members, hopefully sending out fewer emails and utilizing the website more effectively. I wanted to support members in understanding broadly the work VIUFA does, and hopefully create more channels for engagement. Ultimately, I designed a strategy that sees VIUFA sending out one newsletter-type email to the membership every month with a high-level summary of key areas it's working on. I also suggested moving the HRISC resources to the website, and linking them, along with other VIUFA items, in the newsletter. The first email of this sort was sent out in April 2023. I hope this system continues into the next term, and data collected on its usefulness in order to determine if it is an effective way to stay connected to members, and give updates on our work.

I would recommend that VIUFA continues to curate information on its website, and link to it accordingly. I might also suggest some research into a more user-friendly website. In doing research on recent job action from other post-secondary unions, I found a number of websites that seemed cleaner, and more easy to navigate than our own. I also had questions about whether or not the Facebook page was a good way to communicate with members. I wasn't always sure what information was best suited to post on Facebook, and overall, I didn't observe much engagement on that platform.

Bargaining

I supported the bargaining process in its early days by doing some analysis on the initial survey data. I supported the Chief Bargainer in theming qualitative data. I also supported the editing of draft proposals prior to being shown to the general membership. I had been invited to sit at the bargaining table, and was looking forward to this opportunity, but another opportunity to teach two graduate courses arose at the same time, and I chose to teach. To compensate, I volunteered to be the Chair of the Job Action Committee.

Chair of the Job Action Committee

This year, VIUFA created a Job Action Committee. The hope is that we will not have to resort to any job action. Nevertheless, Canadian labour law protects our rights to withdraw our labour, or take other forms of job action, precisely because there are times when that is the only effective way to draw an Employer into meaningful negotiations. Depending on how the bargaining process unfolds, we want to be sure that we are prepared to take action. As Chair of this committee, I canvassed for members, facilitated meetings, set agendas, and reported back to the executive on our discussions. Thus far, we have focused mostly on how to communicate with members about the bargaining process.

Committee Work

I was a member of the Women and Gender Equity Committee, supporting two events on campus: National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, and International Women's Day. I also supported the adjudication of the first call for the Union Activism Fund.

I was also a member of the Finance Committee, a newly-formed committee to ensure greater efficiency and oversight of VIUFA funds. We have worked this year mostly to consider ways to get more interest on surpluses; increase releases for key members of the executive; and bolster our Strike Fund.

Table Officers

As a table officer, I attended table officer meetings and contributed to discussions and issues that arose at this table. Issues that arise for VIUFA are complex, and I am grateful to have been able to have insight into these issues, and work with experienced members to navigate the issues and understand the processes necessary to support them. I supported in a few ways a number of action items that came out of these meetings, including work in the Chief Steward's portfolio.

Final thoughts

A year ago, when considering whether or not I would run for a VIUFA position, I struggled to make the decision. I wasn't sure it was a good fit for me, if I could add value to the team, or if I'd have the time necessary to commit to the work. Looking back, I am grateful that I decided to run and was elected. This experience has been valuable to me and, I hope, to the members I have served. It has been a little overwhelming at times to balance the demands of the VP role, especially in a bargaining year, with my other roles at VIU (which I also love), and my family (whom I really love!). Ultimately, I've had to make some strategic decisions, and have decided not to return for another year. I wish my colleagues and the next VP all the best, and will remain, in solidarity, an ardent supporter of VIUFA.