

Newsletter

Volume 46.6
Editor: Alison Sills

McMaster University Faculty Association - July 2020



**2020
SPECIAL
EDITION**

President's Report

In these unusual times, welcome to an unusual MUFA newsletter. Normally we have a hiatus over the summer months, but this year we thought it is important to stay in touch virtually, since we are still primarily working from home – where ‘working’ might look more like child-care or gardening or baking bread, and ‘home’ might look more like a cottage or the back deck or the balcony while we try to soak up the summer sunshine.

The good news is that for the moment, we seem to be getting a handle on this pesky little bug, and so life is less restrictive than when we dove inside our homes in mid-March. As long as we keep wearing our masks (now required in public spaces on campus), staying 2m apart, washing our hands, and staying home when ill, we can actually move around and do what we need to do. Campus is no longer quite so quiet as it was in April. Research phase 1 has gone extremely well, and Academic phase 1 is following suit. We should be hearing more announcements about phase 2 shortly, and the priority return to work protocol was announced last week. But the messaging from the university leaders is very clear: the default is to stay home. That applies to faculty, staff, students... the entire community. Trips to campus are now special outings, not the mundane daily slog we used to complain about. And while the public announcements are still only mentioning the Fall term, I simply do not see how January is going to be any different, and my sources on various planning groups agree (on condition of anonymity because they do not have the authority to speak publicly on these matters, as they said in the press).

It seems that our students have confidence that we can pull this off. Both graduate and undergraduate acceptances are actually up for September, something that is not uniformly true across the province. I know you all put your best foot forward in March to finish the term, and those of you teaching in Spring/Summer managed some miracles again. Your efforts were noticed! I'm sure many of you are still daunted by the idea of a Virtual Fall – I certainly am! – but I am now optimistic about the good things that are going to come out of this enforced innovation. I always knew our faculty could do what

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was needed, as you have proven time and again, and I think we're going to come out of this even stronger than when we went in.

The other reason I know we're coming through this is that I have had discussions with my colleagues that lasted for A WHOLE HOUR where we didn't even mention COVID. The pandemic has become a perpetual backdrop of our world, but it is no longer the only thing we talk about.

One issue has come to the fore in recent weeks that might have a larger impact than coronavirus. It's certainly been with us for far longer. I'm speaking of systemic racism, which hit a flashpoint in May but is so much bigger than police brutality, affects more than just Black communities, and unfortunately is not restricted to our neighbours to the south. MUFA, and McMaster, have been working on various aspects of Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion for many years, slowly and quietly making small progressive steps on various issues. The hiring of Arig Al Shaibah into the Associate Vice President (Equity & Inclusion) position 2 years ago helped to increase the pace, but I am pleased to see that recent events have spurred even more commitment from the university administration to move initiatives along faster. The underpinning work of various groups on campus over many years has meant that these initiatives were ready to go when the time was right. Our new President David Farrar has taken this issue to be one of his signature contributions. MUFA wholeheartedly supports these efforts, and is also taking our own initiative to contribute to the conversation – look for a notice later in this newsletter about our upcoming survey and focus groups.

“...we're going to come out of this even stronger than when we went in.”

In addition to our new President (who I'm sure hopes that his real term as President is nowhere as exciting as his year as Acting!), MUFA is pleased to see that Karen Mossman is now officially our VP Research – again, someone who undoubtedly wants the drama of an acting role to die down – and we welcome our new Provost, Susan Tighe, from the University of Waterloo. We look forward to all the Zoom meetings we'll have with her... oh, who am I kidding? We're all Zoomed out, and hope that we have the chance to meet our new Provost in person, and on campus, as soon as it is safe to do so. But in the mean time, does anyone have any particularly good virtual backgrounds they want to share?

Stay home, stay safe, stay engaged with MUFA (mufa@mcmaster.ca, available 24/7, no topic too large or small). Find ways to enjoy the rest of the summer, and rest and recharge for this September. We can do this, people, with the usual McMaster flare and style – but I gather not with McMaster-branded face masks.

***Alison Sills
MUFA President***

Long-term disability plan update

As of July 1, 2020, the long-term disability (LTD) plan has changed slightly. The terms of the plan remain the same, as does the process for applying for benefits. The change is that the plan is now a fully-insured plan (where SunLife accepts the risk of the plan), whereas in the previous plan MUFA members were responsible for any year-over-year deficits in the plan. We have paid almost all of those deficits from MUFA dues, and this change in plan structure means we will not have this problem in the future. MUFA will continue to be involved in the annual process of setting the premiums we pay for this benefit.

We are interested in tracking our members' experience with SunLife and the LTD plan. If you have a story (good or bad!) that you'd like to share, please be in touch at mufa@mcmaster.ca.

T2200 tax forms

Some expenses incurred by faculty while working from home may be tax-deductible, although we gather that the CRA is traditionally not generous on this front. In order to request a deduction, faculty must fill out a T2200 form, have it signed by a university representative (typically through their Faculty office) and then submit it with their income taxes. Receipts may also need to be saved and/or submitted. More information can be found on the HR website at <https://hr.mcmaster.ca/resources/employment-related-policies-directives-procedures/>

Welcome New Members

Kevin Browne

Computing and Software

Katherine Bujold

Chemistry and Chemical Biology

Robert Cockcroft

Physics and Astronomy

Nicole Dalmer

Health, Aging and Society

Adrienne Davidson

Political Science

Kaitlin Debicki

English

Leigh Elizabeth Doyle

Anthropology

Allauren Samantha Forbes

Philosophy

Cameron Franc

Mathematics and Statistics

Basit Iqbal

Anthropology

Caroline Junkins

Mathematics and Statistics

Vincent Maccio

Computing and Software

Neerja Mhaskar

Computing and Software

Jennifer Mohaupt

Nursing

Christiaan Mueris

Economics

Manali Mukherjee

Medicine

Laura O'Neill

Psychiatry & Behavioural Neurosciences

Kenneth Owen

Medicine

Laurie Paula Perrett

Rehabilitation Science

Jenna Rajchgot

Mathematics and Statistics

Behnam Sadeghirad

Anesthesia

Smith-Turchyn

Rehabilitation Science

Stephanie Springgay

School of the Arts

Sarah Anne Styler

Chemistry and Chemical Biology

Sarah Svenningsen

Medicine

Jeremy James Walsh

Kinesiology

Angela Lynn Zheng

Economics



Preparing for Teaching Online in Fall 2020

Our colleagues in the MacPherson Institute and in IT departments across the university have been working intensively to support our teaching needs for Fall 2020. You can find many useful resources and training opportunities (self-directed and webinars) at the following links:

- MacPherson's Teaching Remotely site: <https://mi.mcmaster.ca/teaching-remotely/>
- IT Continuity site: <https://cto.mcmaster.ca/it-updates/it-continuity-tools-services/>
- Tech Resources for Students: <https://cto.mcmaster.ca/technology-resources-for-mcmaster-students/>

Some updates and reminders:

- Remote proctoring technology is currently being piloted and evaluated. Look for more information by the end of August.
- Course outlines should now include updated language from Undergraduate Course Management Policies. Your Associate Dean, Academic can provide the details.
- Third-party services that are not supported or endorsed by McMaster might put your students' private data at risk (Policy for the Handling of Personal Information: <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2018/11/handling-of-personal-information-policy.pdf>). Top Hat has been adopted by DSB but is not supported for use in any other Faculty.
- Please remember to include options in your courses for students who may not have reliable internet access or are in different time zones.

We want to know about your working conditions!

MUFA executive members know that some of our members experience inequitable treatment in the workplace, and that inequities may have been exacerbated by the Covid pandemic. For us to be able to advocate for our members, we need good quality data about your experiences. Within the next month you'll be invited to complete a survey that we'll use to inform our decisions, and to negotiate for good working conditions for all our members. Please take the time to respond when you see it!

COVID –19 Resources for Faculty Members

- The University will require face coverings be worn in all indoor public spaces at all [McMaster locations](#), effective Tuesday, July 14
- The majority of employees will continue to work remotely, but those individuals experiencing extenuating circumstances may request [Priority Access](#) through their supervisor to work on campus. This new process is not intended to allow any full-time returns, but rather arrangements to enable limited and controlled access to campus in support of overall employee health, safety, and well-being.
- Updated [Undergraduate Course Management Policies](#) were approved at Senate on July 8, 2020.

A comprehensive list of resources for faculty members can be found on the [MUFA website](#).

Long Term Disability Update: July 1, 2020 Premium Rate for Members of MUFA (Faculty and Senior Academic Librarians) and MUALA

McMaster University's Long-Term Disability (LTD) plan is an income protection benefit plan for eligible employees who become totally disabled as a result of non work-related illnesses or injuries. The LTD plan provides income replacement based on 85% of net income to a maximum monthly benefit of \$10,000.

What is LTD?

LTD is an employee-paid benefit; therefore, the LTD benefit payments an employee receives when on LTD are not taxed as income. Participation in the LTD plan is mandatory and is a condition of employment for eligible employees. The LTD plan is provided through Sun Life Financial. The University is the contract holder with Sun Life and Sun Life adjudicates and pays claims and maintains reserve funds to cover expected disability claims.

How are LTD Premium Rates Determined?

Each year, Sun Life meets with a team which includes representatives from the employee group (as applicable) and Human Resources to review the information about LTD utilization. The financial results are shared with representatives of each of the participating employee groups to enable an understanding of the required change in premiums each year.

Premium rates are experience-based by employee group. LTD rates are renewed each year and different premium rates are set for participating employee groups based on the volume and duration of claims incurred by members of that group. The claim experience for Faculty and Librarians has worsened in the past year and Sun Life has advised that an increase in the premium rate is required.

The LTD Plan is currently refund-accounted. Effective July 1, 2020, the University is moving to a fully-insured arrangement with Sun Life for the LTD Plan which means that any future deficits or surpluses that may result in a given year will no longer be the responsibility of the employee groups.

What Changes can I expect to my LTD Premium Rate?

Effective July 1, 2020, the premium rate will increase from 0.854% to 1.025% of base salary (plus 8% sales tax). LTD plan participants will first notice a change in their LTD premium deductions beginning in either the July 10th or July 17th pay deposit, depending on your pay schedule. The following illustrates the effect of this change:

	Premium Rate for July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020	Revised Premium Rate for July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021	
	0.854%	1.025%	
Annual Salary	LTD Premium (plus tax) Paid per Biweekly Pay (24 deductions per year) *		Increase per Bi-weekly Pay
\$100,000	\$38.43	\$46.13	\$7.70
\$150,000	\$57.65	\$69.19	\$11.54

* Calculation is: ((Annual Salary x Full Premium Rate)/24)*1.08 (PST)

Should you have any questions regarding the LTD Plan, please refer to the Total Rewards webpage for MUFA or MUALA or contact your area HR Advisor. Additional information is also available in the LTD FAQs.

Trauma-Informed Teaching and Learning Online: Principles & Practices During a Global Health Crisis

<p>Physical, Emotional, Social, & Academic Respect</p>	<p>Acknowledge, normalize, and discuss difficult topics that are coming up in their community and in the news.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide content warnings and note the difficult crisis we are all in together • Ask students what they find to be difficult: listen and empathize • Acknowledge that feelings of being overwhelmed and helplessness (and others) may arise, note that seeing other students’ feelings may be triggering for some students • Think about how to balance this time with also covering course content
<p>Trustworthiness & Transparency</p>	<p>Create class routines or rituals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create structured break times and a class agenda that is shared • Create a ritual that you do in each class, such as starting with a 15-minute class check-in discussion and ending with validations
<p>Support & Connection</p>	<p>Conduct regular check-ins with students to help determine how students are doing and if adjustments or supports are needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let your students know that you are there for them • Check-in and follow up in with students who express concerns • Provide referral information for campus resources, such as advising, writing services, etc.
<p>Collaboration & Mutuality</p>	<p>Have class members provide input, share power and make decisions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate student-led discussions and activities • Use student feedback to inform/revise your present and future classes • Invite students to collaborate on revising policies, assignments, and grading
<p>Empowerment, Voice, & Choice</p>	<p>Build in choices where possible. Remind each other that it is okay to “take a break.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop individualized quick break tools: taking a breath, stepping away for a few minutes, and helping students figure out one that works for them. • Allow students to choose their own short break times during a class
<p>Cultural, Historical, & Gender Contexts</p>	<p>Respect one another’s diverse experiences and identities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note that each student might be going through something different: Caregiving for others, sick themselves, without access to technology, struggling with finances, etc. Provide compassion for the range of diverse experiences and struggles. • Acknowledge that particular populations may be targeted or face racism, such as people who look Asian during COVID-19 pandemic and provide support and compassion
<p>Resilience, Growth, & Change</p>	<p>Recognize our individual and collective strength and resilience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice compassion by conveying warmth and support in your communications with students • Use hopeful and optimistic language, laugh when you can • Point out what was done well - in class and with assignments

Online Campus Admin Team: Johanna Creswell Báez, Matthea Marquart, Kristin Garay, and Rebecca Yae-Eun Chung

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Adapted from: Carello, J. (2019). *Examples of trauma-informed teaching and learning in college classrooms*. Retrieved from <https://traumainformedteaching.blog/resources/>

Luncheon for Retired McMaster Faculty Members and Librarians

The annual luncheon for MUFA retired faculty and librarians will not take place in the fall of 2020. We look forward to co-hosting this event as soon as it is safe to do so.

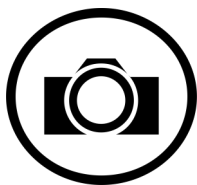
BENEFIT YEAR END REMINDER

Please note the benefit year end is June 30th. Please ensure all claims dated from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020 are submitted to Sun Life **prior** to September 30, 2020.

Late claim submissions will not be reimbursed.

Passages

Richard Morton
English
April 18, 2020



MUFA is always looking for pictures that represent McMaster and faculty to use on our website (www.macfaculty.ca) and in our newsletters. If you have any pictures you would like to share, please email them to mufa@mcmaster.ca.



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