

# PROMOTION WITHOUT PROCESS

NEWS FROM YOUR NUFA PRESIDENT MARCH 2017

Dear colleagues,

I would like to share a letter that I have sent to the Board of Governors concerning the promotions granted to two Deans and the President without following any peer-review process. Our colleagues across the country are outraged by these actions. I hope that our Board Members take seriously their responsibility to promote and protect the reputation of Nipissing University, and recognize how these decisions were ill-considered and ultimately show a lack of respect for the Tenure and Promotion process that all of our Members must follow. NUFA will work to ensure that the ranks of the professoriate are protected at Nipissing University with language that is applicable for all who wish to use these titles meaningfully as earned recognition for their teaching, research, and service.

~Susan

Dear Chair and Members of the Board,

We are writing to bring to your attention an issue of considerable importance to those of us charged with the good governance of the university and the protection of its reputation for excellence and integrity.

The Faculty Association is aware of arrangements made with a number of senior administrators that led to their academic promotion. Through contract negotiations, two Deans were granted promotion to the rank of Professor from their previously earned ranks in the faculty as Associate Professors. Much more problematic is the President's promotion to the rank of Professor given that he has never held an academic appointment prior to his Presidency.

We would like to draw to your attention the significance of these ranks in the university context. They are not honorary titles. They are earned and they reflect a shared set of values and expectations of accomplishment across the sector. As Board members, it is critical that you understand this process, most obviously since all applications for Tenure and Promotion ultimately require your approval, but equally because as stewards of this university, your role is to protect what is a unique feature of the professoriate.

A substantial portion of our *shared* Collective Agreement outlines the requirements and standards that must be fulfilled in order to achieve the rank of Professor. Of particular note is that this rank is earned through peer review. It is only after one has submitted oneself to fairly grueling examination and

assessment from colleagues and peers in one's area of research expertise that one can be awarded a promotion. The process itself takes nearly 6 months, with applicants submitting to their Deans a list of 6 arm's length referees at particular ranks depending on the promotion, and two faculty review committees (TPF and TPU) examining the dossiers and references.

All applications are assessed according to 4 primary criteria and only these criteria: academic qualification, research, teaching and service. There are three ranks: Assistant, Associate and Professor. While the standard to achieve tenure at the Assistant Professor rank is to have shown 'promise' in each of those areas, the standards for promotion to full Professor (the highest rank) include the following:

*...Candidates for Professor must have produced works in addition to those required for promotion to Associate Professor. Furthermore, the candidate must have achieved an international and/or national reputation as an important scholar/creator whose work is having an impact in his/her field. The overall contributions of candidates for Professor must be recognized both within and beyond Nipissing University. A Professor is a distinguished member of the University community who has compiled a record of significant achievements at Nipissing and/or elsewhere and who has added considerably to the research, scholarly and/or creative culture in their field of expertise. Article 25.14(e).*

When the Administration, acting on behalf of the Board, arbitrarily circumvents the process agreed upon we undermine the integrity of the process, and the reputation of the university. Regardless of whether these Administrators are part of the bargaining unit,

the ranks of the professoriate are not simply perks that can be bestowed, and this practice is certainly not the norm in our sector. Indeed, Faculty Associations from across the province and the nation are gravely concerned about this decision made by the Nipissing Administration and its Board of Governors to grant professorial ranks without process.

As it currently stands, two Deans and the President hold the unearned rank of full Professor and sit in judgment of their colleagues seeking tenure and/or promotion according to the criteria in the Collective Agreement. This is a powerfully inequitable situation and one that has deeply troubled all faculty.

Deans write letters of support for their faculty Members, and they chair as well as serve on both of the Tenure and Promotion committees. The President has the ultimate authority to recommend to you, the Board, that tenure and/or promotion be granted or denied. While the potential for ill will and resentment should be obvious to all, what is perhaps less obvious is the way this practice undermines the integrity of the process we have collectively agreed upon for determining academic rank.

This kind of patronage does not serve the best interests of the University and its academic standards of peer review. We bring this matter to your attention as the final arbiters of all appointments to the University and given your role

as co-stewards of Nipissing's reputation and academic integrity. As members of the Board, you need to be aware of this issue and work to ensure that it does not happen again.

For our part, the Faculty Association is now working to remedy this situation moving forward. We will bring the matter to a Joint Committee for the Administration of the Agreement (JCAA) in order to create and negotiate language with the Employer whereby senior administrators may apply for a promotion of their academic rank. This is the common practice across the sector and we wanted to inform you of our next steps on this matter.

We thank you for your attention and your willingness to recognize our shared responsibility for upholding the reputation of our University.

Sincerely,

Susan Srigley  
NUFA President