

NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2020

We hope that you are into a bit of smoother sailing as we approach the midpoint of the semester. Students re-enrolled which is a testament to the extraordinary job the academics of this University did in response to the changes wrought by COVID-19!

The new promotions process has moved ahead, but not without some surprises. It turns out that, within a number of Schools across at least a couple of Faculties, there were “pre-approval” processes being carried out to determine whether applications should be submitted. This is concerning as an ‘unofficial’ process of that kind is entirely opaque as to criteria and fairness of outcomes—any analysis of gender equity, for instance, would be rendered invalid by such a process. It also appears that, in some cases, the extended deadline for the application process occurred after the pre-approval process. UWA ASA members took these issues to the Academic Consultative Committee where the SDVC and the DHR seemed surprised and said that school level pre-approvals had never been an intended part of the changes made to the promotion process. They too perceived the problems inherent in such processes and we expect to hear more from them about this in the near future. For now, we have been told that “[management] are collecting feedback and will take that into account as we look to improve things heading into next year.” We were hoping for more but, in the meantime, UWAASA would like to hear from anyone who was subjected to a pre-approval process. We’d like to know how the process was structured (or not) and hear about your perceptions of the fairness of the outcome.

Vice Chancellor Amit Chakma joined UWAASA’s monthly committee meeting for a long, forthright, and productive discussion. The relative roles of teaching and research, the integration of those undertakings necessary in a research University, and the lack of gender balance in the senior executive were just a few of the many topics. The discussion was open and collegial, and we very much appreciated VC Chakma taking the time to meet with us. Open dialogue that acknowledges the expertise, experience, and commitment of UWA academics to the institution can only improve our University. There was discussion of developing a UWAASA members’ forum with the VC and other members of the University Executive, so watch this space.