

Statement of Interest for Communications Officer

Ricardo Grinspun

If elected as YUFA's Communications Officer, I would dedicate myself to further the reach, scope, and quality of YUFA's communications. As a member of YUFA's Executive Committee, I commit to four key principles – collegial governance, transparency, securing and enhancing members' rights, and deepening member engagement. My priority is for the YUFA Executive to listen carefully to all YUFA members – faculty, librarians and archivists, and post-doctoral visitors. Their interests should be represented in accordance with the democratic direction provided in general meetings, in Stewards' Council, and by elected members of the Executive Committee itself. YUFA communications should strive to engage members and advance these goals.

I have been an active member of YUFA's Executive, serving as Treasurer (2016-18) and as Vice-President Internal (2018-20). Through these roles, I have been involved in virtually all aspects of YUFA governance, working collaboratively with our expert Staff as well as the President and other Executive members. As Treasurer of YUFA, I brought forth concrete strategies and action, under the leadership of YUFA's President, to solidify the financial condition of the Association and make it sustainable into the future. As Vice-President Internal, I continued to enhance the internal work of the Association, through a culture of transparent, effective, collegial, and professional work.

In all these roles, I was an engaged participant in YUFA communications. I contributed to the creation of numerous statements and communications on issues such as governance, members' rights, general meetings, YUFA's external context, finance, and bargaining. I was keenly engaged in discussions of YUFA communications policy in the Executive and served on the committee designing the new YUFA website.

YUFA's communications should reflect the priorities of the Association, most significantly to ensure that the Employer respects our members' contractual rights. This means communications support during times of bargaining as well as the ongoing engagement with the Employer at the Joint Committee on the Administration of the Agreement (JCOAA). Enhancing these rights is essential, and thanks to our strong bargaining team, we hope to go further in the current round despite the unsettling provincial context. Defending these rights against a provincial government that does not respect the role of university education will continue to be a vital priority even after the current bargaining round ends. YUFA communications must continue to raise these issues and challenge the barriers put up by Bill 124 (and the one percent cap on salary increases) as well as other unhelpful provincial regulation, such as the Strategic Mandate Agreements (SMAs).

Advancing Equity must be a priority of the entire Association, and communications must play a central role in advancing that goal. We continue to face gender-based and other forms of

discrimination, such as the persistent pay gaps that exist at York among our members who are women, racialized, and/or Indigenous. In addition, we have all witnessed in recent years numerous incidents of anti-Black racism and anti-Indigenous racism, not only on campus but in society at large: from the racist murder of George Floyd to the confirmation of mass graves at residential schools across Canada. We have also seen examples of Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, from the terror attack against a Muslim family in London, Ontario to the increase in hate crimes targeting Jewish people. What happens off campus affects our lives and work on campus, and so YUFA's communications must strive to respond to these events and echo calls for justice, peace, and reconciliation. When I was in the Executive, we strengthened our support for the four YUFA Caucuses – disability, Indigenous, queer, and race equity – and as Communications Officer, I would continue to work with them, the Equity Officers, and others to make tangible advances. We need forceful mobilization, supported by effective communication, to stand up for YUFA members who face oppression.

YUFA is a faculty association; it is important to nurture aspects of our Association's work, widely supported by members, that do not relate directly to labour relations or contractual rights. YUFA's climate emergency committee, which I helped found and continue to support, works collaboratively with YUFA members from across the university, as well as with students, university staff, York's administration, the Board of Governors and external coalitions to develop a vision and a plan for climate readiness at our University. This is an important area for YUFA communications and opens the door for other non-traditional communication themes of broad appeal to the membership.

In terms of personal background, I hold a PhD in economics from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and have worked at York for over 30 years. I have a deep affection for York University, expressed in multiple ways throughout the years, as a teacher and researcher, in several important service roles, as an administrator, and as an active member of the academic community. I am a committed and passionate teacher who instills in my students the aspiration for an economy that responds to human need – particularly of vulnerable populations – and that is ecologically sustainable. Dedicated to the advancement of research, I have served as an ORU director, have been involved in the fundraising and management of millions of dollars of external funding, have directed several large-scale international development projects, have nurtured the involvement of dozens of graduate students in organized research activities, and have chaired a plethora of conferences, colloquia, and other scholarly activities. I have also served as coordinator of a medium-sized teaching program in the social sciences, where I gained insight on many facets of the administration of teaching.

Throughout more than two decades of committed work on governance, I have pursued a vision of York University as a leading public institution in Canada. In LA&PS Faculty Council, in my support work for YUFA, and most prominently as a York Senator, I have been an outspoken defender of academic and democratic collegial values. In all these activities, I have demonstrated willingness to provide independent judgment and act with the highest ethical standards.

The membership will continue to face serious challenges in our University: the erosion of normal collegial governance processes and a tendency toward top-down managerialism; a disproportionate focus on cost and efficiency that diminishes academic values; a hurtful reality of entrenched inequities and discrimination; increased bureaucratization and diminished academic freedom; the shrinking of public spaces; and the persistent precarization of teaching. We need to defend our member's priorities as we continue to wade through this difficult pandemic. These are all priorities for YUFA's communications.

I look forward to continued work for a strong, independent, ethical, effective, equitable, and vocal Faculty Association. It would be my privilege to bring my background, experience, and commitment to the role of YUFA Communications Officer.