

**Present:** Iesrafeel Abbas, Zuleiga Adams, Ron Addinall, Mansa Aidoo, Frank Ametefe, Waheeda Amien, Pippin Anderson, Bianca Arendse, Abongwe Bangeni, Paul Barendse, Sarah-Louise Blyth, Richard Bradstreet, Stefan Britz, Mercy Brown-Luthango, Adheesh Budree, Sindiswa Busuku, Marianne Camerer, Tony Carr, Chance Chagunda, Faridah Chebet, Emile Chimusa, Allan Clark, Joel Claassen, Brandon Collier-Reed, Aqiel Dalvie, Shari Daya, Melissa Densmore, Ana Deumert, Elmarie Edwards, David Erwin, Nico Fischer, Jacqui Friedling, Hanske Flieringa, Elisa Galgut, Tim Gebbie, Anri Herbst, Geney Gunston, Stuart Hendry, Hilton Heydenrych, Inga Hitzeroth, Peter Hodgkinson, Leon Holtzhausen, Simon Hull, Catherine Hutchings, Jacob Jaftha, Lucy Jamieson, Jaisubash Jayakumar, Michelle Kahn, Claudia Kalil, Meke Kapepo, Maria Keet, Lucia Knight, Dirk Lang, Karen Le Jeune, Refilwe Lepelle, Tim Low, Monica De Souza Louw, Nolundi Luwaya, Soraya Maart, Helen Macdonald, Nkululeko Mabandla, Mandisa Malinga, Patrick Marais, David Maralack, Mark Massyn, Alison Meadows, Kathy Michell, Taryn Miller, Ncedo Mngqibisa, Coleen Moloney, Kelley Moulton, Shaheen Mowla, Pilate Moyo, Gwamaka Mwalemba, Joyce Mwangama, Caroline Ncube, Alecia Ndlovu, Siyabonga Ngubane, Fred Nicolls, Geoff Nitschke, Lindokuhle Njozela, Gideon Nomdo, Nomusa Ntinga, Saul Nurick, John Okedi, Grant Oosterwyk, Uche Ordor, Gwyn Ortner, Bob Osano, Lauren Paremoer, Zarina Patel, Alexander Paterson, Ayanda Pekane, Liesl Peters, Elias Phaahla, Marieke Potter, Elelwani Ramugondo, Chris Reason, Jack Ritchie, Neill Robertson, Christine Rogers, Sheena Rughubar-Reddy, Ed Rybicki, Zaakiyah Sait, Sulaiman Salau, Rebekka Sandmeier, Anna Selmeczi, Corrinne Shaw, Kaveer Singh, Julian Smit, Holger Spakowski, Hussein Suleman, Maureen Tanner, Marianne Vanderschuren, Thomas van Heerden, Tracey Van Heerden, Lance Van Sittert, Harro Von Blottnitz, Amanda Weltman, Adam West, Jennifer Whittal, Abimbola Windapo, Harald Winkler, Nicky Wolmarans, Zenda Woodman, Sahal Yacoob and Nomfundo Xaluva-Dyantyis

**Apologies:** Jacques de Wet, Andrew Lilley, Ulrike Rivett and Chris von Klemperer

### **In Attendance**

Shirifa Hellaby (Academics Union Organizer)

#### **1. Welcome and Apologies**

Kelley Moulton (President of the Academics Union) extended a welcome and thanked those members for making the time to attend the annual general meeting of the Union.

Apologies from members who have been unable to attend were received via email and noted.

Kelley requested if members have other apologies to provide, they type this in the Chat section of MS Teams.

#### **2. Confirmation of the 2020 AGM Minutes**

There were no amendments to the Minutes which were sent to members via email. If members have any adjustments to the minutes, they can raise this with Shirifa.

#### **3. AU President's Report**

Kelley informed the meeting the previous year that they had no inkling of what 2020 would turn out and at that period they had no idea that 12 months later they would still be under lockdown, would survive the catastrophic fire on campus, that staff are not fully back on campus and would still be teaching mostly online.

Kelley indicated that this past year has been an enormously challenging one for academics, which is an understatement, as well as for the University as an institution.

#### a.) Participation in University structures

Kelley informed the meeting that she will circulate the reports of the specific Academics Union participation in University structures, and these include the Institutional Forum (IF), the Transformation Committee, the Academic Freedom Committee, the UCT Retirement Fund, the Nominations Committee, the Staff Development Committee, the Occupational Health and Safety Forum, the Language Policy Committee, the Transportation and Traffic Management Forum for members to be able to read at another time.

There are reports from all of the AU sub-committees that are made available on the AU Vula site as they come in for members' information.

Kelley encourage members to go there to see what the members who represent the Union in those spaces have been doing.

The AU would like to thank the members who represent the Union on those committees. The AU is aware that attending these meetings are enormously time consuming and value their time, expertise, and commitment they show for the Union in attending and reporting back to the Union on the work of those committees.

#### b.) Soft Funded Academic Research Staff (SFARS)

Kelley reports that a big win this past year was the SFARS policy, which recognises SFARS staff's contribution to teaching and recreates a mechanism for amongst other things a sabbatical leave and basic salary security for permanent staff in this group. The policy was passed in Senate in the Principal Circular number 1 of this year and is moving slowly but surely towards implementation.

Kelley informed the meeting that the AU has seen and reviewed the policy changes which were necessitated by the SFARS policy, for example, in terms of sabbatical and other leave and the Union hopes that this policy would be fully operational in 2022.

Kelley indicated that somewhat modest in scope, this policy is a huge win for SFARS and is a starting point from which to continue to advocate to improve the working conditions for SFARS. This is a culmination of an enormous amount of work by the SFARS subcommittee who have been advocating for this policy for over 10 years.

Kelley acknowledged and thanked Shane Godfrey and Nico Fischer for their leadership in this area, and for their patient persistence in making sure this process moves forward and that there is actually a policy to celebrate at this point.

#### c.) Relationship with University Management

Kelley reported that while the AU has mostly had a collegial relationship with Management this year, this has been challenged in 2021 by extremely disorganized and tense bargaining processes between the end of 2020 and 2021. The Union unfortunately experienced little tangible progress from the University side on some of the issues that have been raised through the Consultative Forum and that is, from the way the AU understand it an

experience that is mirrored by organised labour in other bargaining spaces, the Employees Union (EU) and the Coalition.

The AU continually use the quarterly Consultative Forum to address the concerns of members or to seek clarity on matters of interest for Union membership, which is very wide ranging, and the Union encourage members to continue sending through issues that they would like to have raised in this forum and do so by emailing Shirifa, our Union organizer to ensure these are captured and placed on the agenda.

#### d.) Pay Policy agreement

Kelley informed the meeting that the Union is in the final year of the Pay Policy agreement and despite many requests from the AU to commence negotiations on the new Pay Policy, they have not been invited to meet with Management yet on this issue.

Kelley indicated that this remains the Union's top priority and the AU predicts that this is going to be a contentious space. The Union unfortunately has nothing further to report on this issue since the AU has regrettably not been able to meet with Management despite having raised this twice.

The Bargaining committee would have to meet soon to discuss what their next steps are and will report back to members in respect of that.

Kelley expressed her thanks and appreciation to the Bargaining team for the enormous amount of work that they committed both to the 2020-2021 bargaining process to ensure that Management met their obligations under the existing agreement but also the preparation that they are already doing for the negotiations around the Pay Policy that should commence soon.

#### e.) Teaching

Kelley reported that the AU continues to have representation on both the Teaching Online Task Team (TOTT) and the Postgraduate Online Task Team (POTT) for 2022 where the Union fed back the concerns raised by members which were collected from meetings and from written feedback in emails.

Kelley indicated that the AU continues to engage vigorously in that space.

Just as in 2020, the key themes that the AU have raised around academic staff have been around staff burn out, mental health and wellness, managing the workload of academics in the face of this new normal in which people find ourselves.

The AU has also highlighted the need for clear communication around the plans for teaching in 2022 and what is expected from academics as they think about both what academics would like to do and what may be possible for next year.

The AU is aware that there are various discussions in the various faculties around the form that teaching would take.

Kelley indicated if there are specific concerns, members should bring this to the AU so that it could be fed in to these particular task teams.

#### f.) Grievances

Kelley informed the meeting that the AU assist members in terms of grievances and this has taken a lot of energy and capacity in the last year.

Kelley indicated that some of the cases the Union has faced this year have been enormously complex, some of which have stretched for longer than a year. Reported that the AU has successfully protected the interests of many of its members and can only do so because of the dedicated service of members of the Grievance Committee for whom the Union is extremely grateful. Members often only become aware of the work of these AU Executive members when they require assistance and supporting staff through grievances and disciplinary processes takes up an enormous amount of time as it requires skill and dedication.

Kelley expressed her thanks specifically to Tim Low, for his commitment and leadership of this group and also at various points in the year to Maureen Tanner, Mark Massyn, Shaheen Mowla, Catherine Hutchings and Ulrike Rivett for their service to this committee. The AU would be entirely lost without those people.

#### g.) Membership

Kelley informed the meeting that members would hear more from the Treasurer next but in terms of membership, it remains largely stable. The Union represents about 50% of its eligible staff and maintain its threshold for representation amongst senior lecturers and above.

The Union continues to face low membership among lecturers particularly and in the last year, have had the addition of a new job group on the academics of clinical educators and the AU is seeking ways of increasing its visibility and cohort in this group.

Kelley appeals to members to refer particularly new staff to the Union and let them know what the benefits of Union membership are and if materials are needed to assist in contacting a new staff member, reach out either to Shirifa or herself and they would be able to help there.

#### h.) Membership fees

Kelley informed the meeting that the Union remains in a financially good position as Mark's report will show. The Union's main concern is that the University may discontinue its contribution to the Union's cost, and the Union need to think carefully how they use the funds to be able to withstand an impact of such a decision. This is a risk the Union assumes rather than one it has been notified about and thus presently the AU's funds is in a stable position. The AU thus propose continuing the current membership fees at 0.1% of members' CoE.

#### i.) Future challenges

Kelley indicated that in terms of future challenges, the way she views it, the current climate on campus remains difficult and challenging and there are undoubtedly hurdles ahead both for UCT and academics as an academic community. The challenges of deepening fund deficits and austerity remain omnipresent.

Kelley states that we would begin to see the effects of 2020 on the finances of the University playing out in the next couple of years and indicates that we should prepare for a continued bumpy ride in salary negotiations.

The Union sees many academics resigning and as expressed before, the AU is enormously concerned about the impact of increasing workload and demands on academics productivity, health, and well-being. In the view of

the AU, the academic workload has consistently increased since 2016 to the point of being unmanageable this year. There is increasing demands on academics in terms of teaching, administration, and student care that the AU believes have not been properly accounted for.

Support in the form of tutors; increased numbers of tutors was welcomed at the beginning of the year, but the experience of academics is that tutors have dropped off of courses because of their own burn out and the burdens of this additional workload. Inevitably, what needs to be done has transferred back onto academics. Addressing these issues of staff workload, burn out and how to properly quantify and account for that remains a priority for the Union when engaging the University going forward.

The Union also remains extraordinarily concerned about the lack of balance of attention from Management between student and staff issues and the distance members feel between their own experience and what they perceive to be the University's understanding of the academics' day to day environment. There is a perception amongst academics that Management is not completely transparent enough on how it prioritizes the needs of academics in its key decision making and the AU believes that this need to change.

Kelley indicating that underlying this, communication remains a big issue in the way in which the University management engages with academics and considers that as a Union, Management does not value academics enough to communicate important information to academics as a community even though their decisions have bearing on academics as a community.

Kelley reported that in a recent engagement with the Vice-Chancellor, the AU made a number of suggestions which are around three issues namely:

- I. That the University should take a hard and honest look at their fundamental systems and here what is being talked about are registrations, HR, finance, communication, our websites, etc. and to find ways to improve these systems such that they actually support the work of academics rather than add to the work of academics. Student registrations, PeopleSoft, eRA, etc. do not serve the best interests of the University as an administrative space.
- II. The AU also views communication as important in helping to heal the sense of community that seems to have dissipated in the last years. Communication is an important tool to build consensus and community and considers that it is not effectively used in this way and that such, it ends up being one of the barriers to feeling that the University values academics enough to communicate important decisions and information in the way that it is transparent. This was the second key suggestion to the Vice-Chancellor.
- III. Thirdly, the importance of re-establishing a sense of community. Indicated that our sector is undoubtedly facing a financially challenging time and we are probably well into it already and the AU is concerned that collegiality has shrunk as everybody is busy securing their own key focus areas. Considers that it would be great if Management stepped forward and pool the academics together—not only academics but also all staff and to be seen to be on the side of all staff members.

## Conclusion

Kelley acknowledged and conveyed her personal thanks to all the members of the AU Executive for their services given how much work has gone into the work of the Union this past year. Expressed her thanks to Tim Low as Vice-President, Mark Massyn as Treasurer, Andrew Lilley, Christine Swart, Maureen Tanner, Nico Fischer, Sahal Yacoob, Shaheen Mowla, Tim Gebbie and Catherine Hutchings.

Kelley expressed her thanks and appreciation to each member of the AU Executive team and for the contribution each one has brought.

Kelley informed the meeting that Tim Low will no longer serve as Vice-President from 2022 and Catherine Hutchings is also sadly stepping down as well in the next few months.

Kelley appealed to those present in the meeting to step forward and join the AU Executive Committee as members and indicated that it is a very rewarding space to work in although it definitely has its challenges and its moments, but the AU definitely needs members to step forward to help continue the work of the Union.

Kelley indicated that she would be pleased to hear from members who would like to volunteer their services immediately or otherwise they can contact her as the AU needs at least 3 new members to step forward and take a place on the AU Executive.

Kelley conveyed her thanks to Shirifa Hellaby, the Union organizer, whose service in that role is often unseen but valued; thanked Shirifa for being enormously patient, always being efficient, stepping in to attend meetings this year which has not been part of her set of responsibilities previously and for ensuring that everything in the Academics Union moves smoothly, is done and gets in on time.

Kelley also conveyed her thanks to the members and informed them that the AU hopes to continue engaging with them over the next year.

Tim Gebbie thanked Kelley for all her work and informed the meeting that people do not really understand how much work this is and how much work she is doing for them.

Many members expressed their thanks to Kelley and the AU Executive team in the Chat section of MS Teams.

#### **4. Draft 2020 Audited Financial Statement**

##### **a. Draft 2020 audited financial statement**

A copy of the draft 2020 audited financial statement produced by Nolands (Mowbray branch) was made available to members via email. Mark Massyn (Treasurer) provided an overview.

##### **Income and expenditure Summary for 2020:**

- The finances of the Union is comfortable at present.
- Membership income was R599 924, which is slightly up from 2019.
- The Union had very few expenses in 2020.
- The major difference in the income was that the investment income dropped from R227 913 to R166 371.
- This left the Union with a surplus of R677 027 in total for the year.
- The total in the investment accounts is R5 299 750. This might seem to be a lot of money, but as Kelley mentioned earlier, the one thing the Union is worried about is that the University might at some stage, withdraw the grant they provide the AU.
- In 2020 the Union received just over R418 000 from the University.
- Kelley made reference to the Grievance Committee, and we need to thank her and Tim Low for the amount of hours they have put in at no cost at this stage. Although it was discussed with them, they have not yet submitted any claims for the amount of hours they have spent working with grievances.
- What the Union discussed at its last Executive meeting is that some of the cases are quite complex and that it would have to start thinking about bringing a labour lawyer on board.
- As the Union discovered in its negotiations with Management in 2017, the costs of lawyers are exorbitant.
- Informed the meeting that the Union had to hire a lawyer at the beginning of this year when the Bargaining team became bogged down with Management during negotiations.

- Going forward, the Union needs to have a contingency allowance for the use of attorneys and lawyers to assist the AU.
- Kelley earlier made reference to the fact that the AU is still waiting to enter negotiations with Management around the Pay Policy, and again, it is possible that the Union might have to obtain legal advice in this regard.

b. Re-appointment of Nolands as auditor

Mark proposed the Union re-appoint Nolands as auditor, which was seconded by Nico Fischer.

Kelley thanked Mark Massyn for his services to the Union and informed the meeting that he would retire from UCT at the end of 2022 and enquired if anyone with financial skills wishes to take on the role as Treasurer so that a smooth handover can be done and ensure that the AU is in good financial shape for that transition.

**5. Election of the new Executive Committee for 2021-2022**

Kelley reiterated that the AU would lose two members this year, namely Tim Low and Catherine Hutchings who will be stepping down from the AU Executive and the Union need more people to assist in this regard.

Request someone to support and second the motion to elect the existing members of the AU Executive to serve for another year.

This was supported by Tim Low and seconded by Sindiswa Busuku.

Name	Position	Faculty	Years/ months serving on AU	Standing for Re-election
Kelley Moulton	President	Law	7	Yes
Tim Low	Vice- President	CHED	7	No
Mark Massyn	Treasurer	EBE	6	Yes
Nico Fischer	Elected	EBE	6	Yes
Andrew Lilley	Elected	Humanities	6	Yes
Christine Swart	Elected	Science	6	Yes
Shaheen Mowla	Elected	Health Sciences	3	Yes
Tim Gebbie	Elected	Science	3	Yes
Maureen Tanner	Elected	Commerce	3	Yes
Sahal Yacoob	Elected	Science	2	Yes
Catherine Hutchings		CHED	10 months	No

**6. General Discussion**

Kelley enquired if members have any issues, they wish the AU to continue to advocate or points they wish to raise.

i. An enquiry from a member:

Thanks, the AU for all their hard work and wishes to know where the information on the SFARS can be found.

Response from Nico Fischer:

He is not sure if the information has been openly published at this stage. Informed the member that the AU is happy to talk through it and the information and status the policy is in. Indicated that according to his knowledge this information has not been officially published yet nor has an official implementation date been provided.

Response from Kelley:

Informed the member that the AU can publish the version that was in the Principal Circular on the Academics Union website but not sure how the wording would have changed since then as they looked at it with relation to existing policies. Indicated that the AU can request an up-to-date version of the policy too.

- ii. An enquiry from a member in the Chat section: Has the AU endorsed the Senate approved motion on mandatory SARS2 vaccination?

Response from Kelley:

Informed the meeting that the AU has not taken a position on whether the Union endorses it or not in recognition of the fact that its members hold very different views as with most things. Members would have heard her saying in the last year that having an AU position on anything is exceptionally difficult. The AU did take the notion to members to see whether they supported it and fed this into the discussion at Senate. The outcome of that poll is that 81% of AU members supported the mandate, and the remainder membership did not support for a variety of reasons, and this was also fed into the Senate discussion.

The motion on mandatory Covid-19 vaccines has been supported by Senate with a vote of 183 supporting that the motion be taken to Council; with 32 Senate members not supporting and 5 Senate members abstained. This will now go to Council who will do their own deliberations.

- iii. An enquiry from a member:

Reiterated and thanked Kelley and the AU for all the hard work they have provided and wished to follow up if there has been any progress on the language lecturers in Health Sciences grievance and whether there has been any feedback from the DVC as yet as he is aware there has been a movement on the job evaluation?

Response from Kelley:

Informed the member that there has been an enormous amount of work on that particular group, which has resulted in the creation of a new job family and indicated that Tim Low could provide more information on that.

Response from Tim Low:

Informed the member that he was receiving as much information from the DVC and the Deputy Dean in Humanities as the AU, and he has not heard anything more. Indicated that he could fill the member in out of the meeting to see if they could attempt other angles.

## **7. Closure**

Kelley thanked everyone for attending the meeting and for their involvement and engagement with the Union.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 13h40