



BRITISH COLUMBIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
Summary of Results of the Tech Rep Café, April 9, 2008

The “Tech Rep Café” was a session held to elicit feedback from the FSA’s Tech Reps about how the FSA can better support them in their roles and how they could get more involved. The format used was based on the World Café methodology. The session was facilitated by Brian Thom and Barbara Davis of the Learning and Teaching Centre. The session consisted of three questions with fifteen minutes to discuss each one. Participants moved to different table groupings for each successive question.

The information included here is transcribed directly from the resulting flip chart reports.

1. What role should Tech Reps play? (not ranked)

- Stay informed
- Raise awareness of departmental programs/activities, management and member issues, etc.
- Share/clarify general information
- Develop two-way interaction
- Advise of danger ahead
- Act as liaison between Management, FSA members, and Department
- Be active/attend meetings, record notes; provide feedback to members
- Encourage two-way communication between Tech Reps and FSA executives
- Source of knowledge/provide expertise and supply information pertaining to Collective Agreement, Training, etc.
- Provide answers to member questions
- Be responsive to departmental issues
- Be a reminder of rules
- Promote FSA website and encourage utilization
- Educate members and provide clear definition of expectations
- Be seated on institute committees as required
- Diffuse rumours (*Editorial comment – we think/hope they meant defuse, not diffuse*)
- Monitor FSA activities for members’ benefit
- Promote FSA values and mandate within the Department/Programs
- Program champion within FSA

2. What barriers to fulfilling that role do you encounter in your department? (not ranked)

- Lack of training in Collective Agreement and in role of Tech Rep
- Lack of access to current Collective Agreement – search website for agreement?
- Lack of member interest/awareness
- Lack of specialty training (required to perform at peak times - bargaining)
- Lack of flexibility (meeting times)

- Conflicts of Interest/Confidentiality issues
 - Prioritizing, i.e. students, other staff, pay raise, lunch, union business, other meetings, etc. (apathy)
 - Organizational issues – understanding culture of FSA (reactive vs. proactive)
 - Uncertainty – acting roles
 - Fear of retaliation (to raise issues)
 - Potential conflicts of interest
 - Representation (personal vs. departmental opinion)
 - Workload
 - Lack of incentive to be Tech Rep (appoint vs. volunteer)
 - No training – expectations unclear
 - Lack of member feedback/involvement
 - Lack of support
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3. How can the FSA support you as a Tech Rep to fulfill your role? (These were voted on and are in sequence)

Education/Training 37 votes

- Provide easy access to Collective Agreement (not in print) (18 votes)
- Improve information flow/communication (emails) (7 votes)
- Offer Break Out sessions and Lunch n' Learns throughout the year (5 votes)
- Conduct annual review of Collective Agreement (Nov/Dec) (4 votes)
- Provide education/mentorship programs (Senior Tech Reps to Junior Tech Reps) (3 votes)
- Re-define Tech Rep Role

Meetings/Communication 29 votes

- Provide pre-meeting sessions (i.e. 'did you know') (13 votes)
- Circulate Minutes of Meetings to all Tech Reps (9 votes)
- Review policy and emphasize focus on FSA issues (7 votes)
- Empower Tech Reps by providing opportunities for their input (help create agenda items) (9 votes)

Orientation 27 votes

- Make clear expectations (9 votes)
- Explain communication requirements (9 votes)
- Provide job descriptions (9 votes)
- Increase role awareness
- Encourage FSA executives to visit departments

Incentives 17 votes

- To raise attendance levels at meetings: (10 votes)
 - run contests
 - improve agenda items
 - provide guest speakers
 - create exciting venues
- Provide release time (suggest ½ hr. per week) and other benefits (backfill) (7 votes)
- Encourage involvement/running for office

FSA Office 14 votes

- Provide better access to Grievance Officers (7 votes)
 - Provide centralized location (7 votes)

Budget 1 vote

- Exercise Budget control (ensure adequate funding to host departmental meetings) (1 vote)