

**Gül Çalışkan, who has served on the FAUST Executive Committee for the past three years, was elected FAUST President at the virtual Annual General Meeting on April 14th. Gül will officially begin her duties as FAUST President on May 1st.**



April 14, 2020 FAUST-AGM Meeting

**For those who missed the meeting, we have posted Gül's acceptance speech here:**

Thank you, so much, Robin, for your kind introduction.

Thank you also to the FAUST executive and members, for giving me the privilege to speak at this extraordinary AGM, at this extraordinary time.

First, let me say a few words about myself. I'm a daughter of a city worker who was also a union activist. My Dad and his peers fought for the right to be unionized. The fear of losing their jobs was always real, as their employer moved them from one type of job to another—from road construction, to demolition, to waste management. They could be laid off any time, and the danger of our family falling into abject poverty was very real. But finally, my Dad and his colleagues got their union.

All I remember, however, is going to the union meetings sitting on my dad's shoulders and having fun at their family picnics. But now I know how real their struggle was. Unions have always mattered, and unions always will matter, and I'm proud to be a member of our union today.

I joined STU in 2013, and the FAUST executive in 2017. Collegiality, transparency, kindness, generosity and an incredible sense of social justice have always been at the core of every meeting and every exchange. Since then, I have learnt so much from all who served on the executive committee. I'd like to give a special mention to Craig Proulx, Jean Sauvageau, Mary Lou Babineau, Robin Vose, Moira McLaughlin, Jeannette Gaudet, Mike Fleming, Janice Harvey, and Matt Robinson. Thank you. And Bonnie Huskins and Adrienne Wilson are the best possible office team.

I also want to thank the nominating committee for having faith in me. I will do my best to live up to everyone's expectations and hopes.

But, full disclosure folks: I am not Robin. We all know filling Robin's shoes is impossible. Nevertheless, because of all his hard work during his tenure as our president, our union is in excellent shape for me to continue his legacy. I will be looking to him as our Past President for guidance and will continue to learn from him.

And THIS I can promise. I will give all I can and do the best I can to fulfill the expectations of our nominating committee and the membership. I will reach out every step of the way to the exceptional group of people we call the Executive. I promise that I will listen and do my best to offer a balanced perspective in my communications and negotiations. I will strive for stability for our members. Above all, in everything I do I will try to be thoughtful and empathetic, because this is the integral heart of FAUST.

I am thankful that I will be able to learn from and work with the best. YOU! Nevertheless, it will be a steep learning curve for me, particularly because we are in the middle of a global health pandemic. We are entering an unknown period and still have our bargaining to be completed.

Times have indeed changed. This AGM may represent the start of a different era for our university and our union. Although it may seem daunting to take over during this time, it is also promising. I'm grateful for this opportunity to serve our union at this extraordinary time in our history.

When I told my Father, who faced similar struggles in another place at another time, that I do not really feel prepared for this role, he said, "Just remember where you started and recognize where you are now. That will guide you to what you can offer in this service." And this same is true for our union – look where we started and where we are now.

We all have some very big questions in these extraordinary times including: What is our vision and what are our hopes? What do we expect from our union and our university administration? I hope to elaborate on these and other questions in the coming days.

So, as I ponder these questions and others, I again reflect on my Dad's advice on bridging the past and present to navigate the future. Thanks to the incredibly strong institutional memory of FAUST and the incredible work that the current executive has done under Robin's leadership, we now have a very strong union which will guide us in navigating any crisis as we build a proactive vision.

In conclusion, I will just leave you with these thoughts:

In maintaining what has gone before, I will continue to respect the Collective Agreement, as it is a living entity. I will also continue to demand transparent governance from the Employer. And I will continue to protect our rights and strive to improve our working conditions.

As I welcome back the returning members of the executive (Robin Vose, Moira McLaughlin, Mike Fleming, Janice Harvey, and Matt Robinson), I would like to extend a special welcome on behalf of all of us, to Shannonbrooke Murphy, our newest member. Also, best wishes to Jeannette Gaudet during her sabbatical. We are very thankful for her work as Senior Grievance Officer.

I thank you all for your time.

In solidarity.

May you all stay healthy and well during these turbulent times.

Gül Çalışkan, Vice President and President-elect