

January 8, 2021

delivered via e-mail: boardchair@ualberta.ca

Kate Chisholm
Chair, Board of Governors
University of Alberta
3-04 South Academic Building
Edmonton, AB T6G 2G7

Dear Board Chair Chisholm,

As the Executive of the Confederation of Alberta Faculty Associations (CAFA), we were surprised and disappointed by the decision of the U of A Board of Governors, which you chair, to impose another layer of corporate bureaucracy onto University governing structures, by overriding the recommendation from General Faculties Council.

Bicameral governance is based on the premise that academics understand how best to organize academic units and reporting structures to achieve the best outcomes related to teaching and research. In this case, academic experts from all units on the University of Alberta campus had engaged with the need for better reporting and provided you and the Board with a collegial academic mandate, one that had an overwhelming vote of support at General Faculties Council.

We are deeply concerned that rather than take the advice of General Faculties Council, arrived at through extensive collegial consultation and academic deliberation, the Board decided to impose greater distance between the President and Provost, relative to frontline academics, at a time when more direct and collegial communication and actions are required to face the challenges ahead. While we are skeptical about the merit of this decision, CAFA sees no justification, for the Board's decision to ignore the recommendation from its General Faculties Council.

Our universities are public institutions of higher learning, and therefore emphasize university activities in the public interest. The U of A strategic plan underscores this intent in its very title "For the *Public Good*." The plan emphasizes that "At the highest level, 'For the Public Good' is meant to empower and enable each member of the University of Alberta to build, experience, excel, engage and sustain (emphasis added)."

The Board's decision to step away from this noble mandate, will not only lead to less empowerment and engagement for those on the front line contributing to "the public good" but it is instead a step toward greater hierarchical, closely held, centralized decision making, the antithesis of collegial bicameral governance. Although corporate governance models may appear tidy, when applied to universities much is lost, especially when a bureaucratic corporate layer is added, as decided by the Board. With the insertion of such a corporate style

administrative filter, there will be less democracy, less debate, less engagement, less creativity and reduced nimbleness, the very attributes collegial bicameral governance is designed to foster.

CAFA is committed to collegial bicameral governance. We have copied this letter to the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) that is also deeply concerned about the Board's action. We also call on the University of Alberta Board of Governors to reverse its decision, and approve the original proposal sent to the Board by the General Faculties Council.

Sincerely,

Kevin Kane, President, CAFA

Ricardo Acuña, President, AASUA

Claudia Steinke, President, ULFA

Rafat Alam, President, GMUFA

Lee Easton, President, MRFA

David Powell, President, AUFA

Heather Bruce, Past-President, CAFA

cc. Bill Flanagan, President, U of A (uofapres@ualberta.ca)
Brenda Austin-Smith, President CAUT (president@caut.ca)
Demetrios Nicolaidis, Minister of Advanced Education (demetrios.nicolaidis@gov.ab.ca)