

May 27, 2022

sent via email

Office of the President
Attention: Dr. Paul Mazerolle
Sir Howard Douglas Hall, Room 111
UNB Fredericton Campus

Dear Dr. Mazerolle,

Re: Proposed Restructuring

I write in relation to the proposed restructuring of senior leadership at UNB. As you are aware, on May 19, 2022, a Joint meeting of the Fredericton and Saint John Senates was held to discuss this topic, and in particular, vote on whether to pursue a shift from a model where each campus has an academic Vice President to one where a Provost oversees the academic portfolio on both campuses. The proposal would also consolidate administrative and financial activities (currently at least partially distributed on the two campuses) under the VPAF.

As you have been advised, AUNBT's interest in this topic has been focused on process. AUNBT has taken the position that any such change must be grounded in collegial decision-making, undertaken with adequate and meaningful consultation and with a full discussion of the implications for the UNB Act and the AUNBT/UNB Collective Agreement. AUNBT communicated its concerns to you in this regard on December 2, 2021 in a letter that was subsequently posted to the AUNBT website. As you are aware, there has been, to date, no direct response to this letter.

The discussion that unfolded at the May Joint Senates meeting has heightened and added to AUNBT's concerns in the following ways:

- 1) A key premise of discussions around this proposal was that decision-making on the matter would be collegial. In this sense, "collegiality" refers to the right and responsibility of academic staff to participate in decision-making and shared governance as expressed in Article 5 of the Collective Agreement. In the past year, you have indicated on the record to both Senates and to the Board that you would not proceed with these changes without a majority vote of support by each Senate and by the Board. While there has been some discussion about whether such support is technically required, you have indicated that a vote would be required to maintain the "moral authority" to proceed – a position AUNBT endorses. It was thus shocking to hear you express before the vote that you did not consider support of both senates requisite. You shared a perspective that senates are advisory, and that senators were "proxy leaders" (the meaning of this was not clear). These comments are gravely concerning as they do not seem to take into account the nuanced division of powers between Senates and the Board as reflected in the UNB Act. In any event, AUNBT does agree that the overwhelming vote against the proposed change by one Senate represents a loss of moral authority, thus requiring a complete re-evaluation of restructuring and a rejection of the proposal attached to the motion at the May joint meeting.
- 2) In advocating for the change in leadership, you indicated during the Joint Senate Meeting that there had been fulsome and abundant consultation. In AUNBT's view, this is only partially true in that consultation involved several formats and occurred over a period of time. However, for consultation to be meaningful, it must involve diverse and sustained periods of engagement, and

the resulting decision-making must be responsive to the feedback received. In other words, it must be possible for people to see a change of course resulting from their feedback, especially if that feedback is widespread. Of the consultation that did occur, the only opportunity for feedback that clearly met the criteria to be meaningful was a workshop session in the late fall of 2021 where the model currently being considered emerged. Disappointingly, this workshop was limited to “Directors Plus”, a category that includes Deans and non-academic staff managers, but severely limits non-management academic staff, and completely removes AUNBT members from the discussion. AUNBT was not even aware of the Director-plus workshop when it provided feedback in December; details only became clear through comments made in Senate meetings. In light of this, and in consideration of the stated intention to view the feedback from academic staff and the votes of Senates as non-binding and merely advisory, consultation on this topic can hardly be described as meaningful.

- 3) While AUNBT maintains that the votes of Senates must be respected, and that consultation processes must be transparent, sustained, diverse, and meaningful, the vote and surrounding discourse make it abundantly clear that the proposal and approach to consultation related thereto have enflamed bi-campus relationships and exacerbated feelings of mistrust and resentment. This dynamic benefits no-one. As a public university, before any further discussion of leadership models occurs at UNB, we must improve these relationships and find ways to enable academic staff to work together to discharge their duties and meaningfully contribute to the meeting of our institutional mandate around teaching and research.

In light of the foregoing, AUNBT urges you to re-consider your approach to this issue. The results from the joint Senate meeting were clear – this proposal does not have the support of the broader university community. As alluded to in our letter of December 2, 2021, successfully negotiated changes to the AUNBT/UNB Collective Agreement will be required for the proposed restructuring of senior leadership at UNB to take effect. With this in mind, AUNBT reminds you that its engagement on this topic is tied to its views of the process-related interests discussed in this letter and in AUNBT’s letter of December 2, 2021.

As is demonstrated by continued efforts to engage with you on this topic, AUNBT remains eager to collaborate and problem solve on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Dr. Melissa White
President, AUNBT

Cc: Robyn Tingley, Chair, UNB Board of Governors