

April 12, 2023

Dear Ms. Maria Vasanelli, Chair and members of the Lakehead University Board of Governors

RE: Deputation - Collegial, transparent, and open hiring and renewal procedures for senior academic administrators: Renewal of Deputy Provost and Vice-Provost (Teaching & Learning), and Associate Vice-Provost (Academic) AND *Appointment of Academic Administrators Policy (the 'Policy')*

LUFA has, for the last several years, advocated for a transparent and collegial hiring process for senior administrators. This is the norm in Canadian universities, is essential for the proper operation of a collegial system of governance, and is recognized in **Article 8.03** of the Collective Agreement between the Board of Governors and LUFA.

In the deputation on June 10, 2022, LUFA shared with you our concerns related to the processes of hiring and renewing senior administrators at Lakehead. In our presentation, we expressed our desire to work together as a team and achieve common goals such as building a university that serves the community's needs, that is a welcoming and nurturing place to learn, that is a safe and fulfilling place to work, and most of all, that is resilient and sustainable through difficult times. We also highlighted the risks to Lakehead and its members if it is governed in a non-collegial manner.

Non-collegial hiring processes have been prevalent at Lakehead University for a long time, resulting in a regrettable erosion of trust between the faculty and the administration. This erosion is reflected in the growing authority wielded by the President, particularly in matters like renewing Vice-Presidents and terminating tenured faculty. More recently, the senior academic administrative positions of Deputy Provost and Vice-Provost (Teaching & Learning) and Associate Vice-President (Academic), which were filled in 2020 without advertisement and without an open and transparent hiring policy, have come up for renewal, again without a formal process to engage the Faculty Association and the university community at large on such academic decisions. This lack of meaningful consultation has further deepened the concerns of the Faculty Association, and we are reiterating our objections.

Senates and faculty unions represent vital components of the system of checks and balances that ensure the maintenance of collegial governance. Senate procedures and collective bargaining are mechanisms to ensure negotiated and legally binding solutions to shared challenges. A commitment to collegial governance can restore and maintain the balance of power, transparency and trust required to ensure Lakehead's autonomy and sustainability. Transparency is much easier to maintain when all stakeholders are meaningfully involved, and when their contributions are valued in an inclusive environment.

As such, the **Lakehead University Faculty Association asks the Board to terminate the current renewal processes for the positions of Deputy Provost and Vice-Provost (Teaching & Learning) and Associate Vice-Provost (Academic).**

The original appointment of the Deputy Provost and Vice Provost (Teaching & Learning) elicited a long, contentious debate on the Senate floor (**Monday, October 26, 2020, Senate minutes: 6.7 – Senate Organization Committee Report**). The justification for the expedited hiring process, at that time, was that it was only to be for a brief period. On March 10, 2023, the administration sought feedback on the renewal of the Deputy Provost and Vice-Provost (Teaching & Learning) and Associate Vice-Provost (Academic) from a select few, rather than the entire university community. This renewal process seeks to legitimize what was supposed to be an exceptional, non-precedent-setting, closed, rushed appointment.

In his reply to LUFA's letter of March 20, 2023 (cc'd to Ms. Vasanelli, Chair of the Board of Governors and Dr. McPherson, President), the Provost and Vice-President (Academic) referenced a new renewal policy that was pending approval and indicated that in the meantime they were following the past renewal practices for a decanal review process. Unfortunately, these past renewal practices have provided a closed and non-transparent decision-making process. As such, LUFA is again voicing its objection.

Since the long debate on the Senate floor in October 2020, the administration has failed to conduct an open and transparent search and appointment process for either position in question. It is concerning that the administration is relying on problematic past practices for renewals of interim appointments. While the development of a new policy (pending approval) appears to signal a shift toward acknowledging the need for a more transparent process, this effort has not included input from LUFA and the wider university community. It is unclear how this policy can address the issues of openness, transparency, and collegiality when it was developed in exactly the opposite way.

The appointment and renewal processes for senior academic administrators have been and continue to be conducted behind closed doors, without broad advertisement or merit-based criteria. LUFA would welcome the opportunity to provide input on the new policy in development and to be a part of an open search and appointment process for both positions. There is no need to rush to renew either position.

LUFA urges the Board of Governors to immediately terminate the renewal processes for the positions of Deputy Provost and Vice-Provost (Teaching & Learning) and Associate Vice-Provost (Academic). Further, we ask that LUFA and the wider university community be engaged in the development of a hiring policy for senior academic administrators that is based on foundational principles of openness, transparency, collegiality, and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. Once this important policy work is complete, an open and transparent search for both senior academic positions in question can begin.

Thank you for your cooperation on these important matters.

Sincerely,

LUFA Executive