

In response to the announced Townhall meeting, FAUW asked our Council of Representatives and our Board of Directors to talk to faculty and send some information to us about questions they would like to see answered at the event. This list includes the questions FAUW submitted as a result of this process. Some of the questions were answered at the meeting; where they were, a brief summary of the answers provided is included in italics. Unanswered questions are in green.

1. Quest University (formerly the Sea to Sky University) in BC is in serious financial trouble, having once again failed to meet its enrolment targets this year. While the University of Waterloo and the Faculty of Arts have been very sparing with details about the Stratford initiative, the business model for Stratford—attract foreign, full-fee paying students to a high quality specialized liberal arts education, partly on the basis of the advantages provided by the location of the campus—is very similar. This raises short term and long term questions: in the short term, is UW taking the lessons of Quest’s significant money losing in its early years as a cautionary lesson about what to expect from Stratford, especially in difficult financial times? A second, longer term question: why should we expect more foreign students to be willing to pay for a winter in Stratford than for a winter in Squamish?

Follow up if the answer is “we’re going to have a professional Master’s instead”: World Trade University in BC has also run into difficulties. Their plans for an International MBA was recently withdrawn, presumably because the application had no chance of being approved by the BC government’s Degree Quality Assurance Board. So ... what assures us that we’re not heading down this road?

2. More generally, as was noted in the Daily Bulletin this week, the Provost reported to the BOG that the cost of distant campuses is consistently higher than expected. While the overseas campuses are often touted as money makers, few details about the business plan are public, and certainly some universities with overseas campuses (including in UAE) are losing money on them. What grounds do we have for confidence that the overseas campuses will not turn out to be a drain on our already problematic budget, decreasing our ability to do our core work here in Waterloo?
3. While the current measures taken by the Administration have been described as a “hiring delay”, we know of at least some staff jobs that have disappeared since the “delay” was announced. What plans does the University have for further layoffs?

The Administration currently has no plans for lay offs, now or in the spring, of people with permanent employment with UW. The layoffs to date, it seems from the discussion at the Town Hall, have been of people whose employment is “contingent on available funding”. Unsurprisingly, the President and Provost did not guarantee that there would not be layoffs (applying the sensible “never say ‘never’” principle), but gave the strongest assurances one could expect. Catharine Scott (Associate Provost, Human Resources) described some of the features of Policy 18, which deal with what happens if it ever does come to the stage of staff layoffs, and reported on the history of UW’s going out of its way to avoid them. [For Faculty, the

relevant information is in sections 16 (Financial Exigency) and 17 (Lay-Offs) of the Memorandum of Agreement between FAUW and the University.] Some ideas were raised from the floor about what could be done for “contingent” employees who lose their jobs (with respect to using them to fill vacancies that nobody was being hired into, for instance), though nothing definite was said in reply.

4. Faculty are working flat out at UW right now. If they must increase their undergraduate teaching (by teaching either larger or more classes), the result will show up in declining research funding and smaller capacity for registering grad students. Increasing the number of professional graduate students will, without extra faculty, have a negative impact on both undergraduate education and traditional graduate programs (and so on research). Keeping research efforts constant will cause a decline in the quality of undergraduate education. We understand that tough times necessitate tough decisions, but can you provide some direction to academic units and individual faculty about which corners you would like to see cut?

FAUW President David DeVidi asked this once there was an opportunity to raise questions from the floor. The President responded that he did not think it sensible to make general suggestions about such matters, but recognized that there are definitely “pressures” (especially given the calls earlier in the meeting for faculty to redouble their efforts to attract external research funding, to increase enrolment in professional graduate programs, and the announcement that undergraduate enrolment increases were part of the solution to our budget woes). He suggested that it is a matter for academic units and faculties to determine on their own what would have to be done to deal with the pressure.

5. Many units are concerned about the criteria for determining which hiring will go ahead. Some feel that replacement positions should have priority: the vast majority of our operating budgets still come from our core programs ... for departments that are already short of teachers (and who may have believed promises that “it is never a bad idea to leave a position empty ... don’t hire just to have someone in the job”), core programs will decline without replacements, especially if they’ve also recently increased graduate enrolment. Some worry that only new programs will get to continue to hire, because they promise new students and new income, on the assumption that the old income won’t go away simply because quality of education and research in the existing departments declines ... So, with this kind of speculation going around, can the Provost provide clarification of the sorts of criteria that will be applied in determining who gets to hire and who does not?

In response to a version of this question, the Provost said that the criterion to be applied is that there will be hiring if and only if the position in question is “mission critical.” Unfortunately, this term was itself not defined, except by example: the new campus in downtown Kitchener needs security, and the security personnel on campus are already stretched thin, so one additional person will be hired to enable them to cover the new campus; there are courses that the Pharmacy program must offer in January to the students already enrolled to take it, but nobody is in place to teach it, so someone will need to be hired; the President later added the example of some world class scholars we are hoping to recruit, and this recruitment process will

continue.

6. Has the UAE campus ever been approved, or put to any sort of vote, at Senate? If not, does this reflect a view that the University Administration thinks it has a right to enter into joint ventures of many sorts without approval from Senate? (The worry here is with, for instance, articulation agreements with colleges, joint programs with colleges, guarantees of admission to those who complete programs at commercial education institutions, etc., all of which have been entered into by some public universities in Canada ... without Senate approval, there is not even pro-forma quality control for such arrangements.)

This was not addressed at the Town Hall. However, there is a motion on the agenda for the November Senate meeting asking Senate to approve the UAE initiative (as so far described to Senate) in principle.

7. There has not been any news of other universities undertaking similar measures to UW's hiring and discretionary spending freeze. The Administration has been offering assurances about the relative financial health of UW compared to other universities. Why, if we are relatively better off financially, are we in a position where we must be more cautious than other universities?

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