

April 22, 2024.

**Open Letter to the King's University-College Board, Administration and Community Regarding Governance Reform and Reorganization.**

Dear King's,

We thank and appreciate the time the Steering Committee and Academic Dean have taken to meet with the community to answer our questions and listen to our concerns about governance reform and reorganization. We share their stated commitment to the spirit and letter of collegial governance. Our role is to represent faculty and to facilitate the responsibilities of faculty as set out in the collective agreement, including the "responsibility to participate in the life of the university and its governance and administration" (Appendix B section 4.1), and "to seek reforms, which would, in one's judgment, improve the university" (Appendix B section 4.2). We are committed to ensuring that the process be proper, transparent, and participatory for our members and other constituencies in the King's community.

The following are KUCFA's expectations regarding the ongoing reform of governance and reorganization;

That all processes and outcomes must align with the University-College's collective agreements procedurally and structurally. Section 1.4 of the collective agreement between King's and KUCFA stipulates,

Collegial governance is essential to the Mission of King's and is a necessary element in the strategy to realize the Vision for King's. The parties acknowledge the existing rights, privileges, and responsibilities of Faculty Members to participate in the formulation and/or recommendation of policy within the governance structures of King's as set out in the King's by-laws. Subject to the provisions of clause 1.5, the Parties agree that the governance of King's will be open and transparent (e.g. copies of the line budget and expenditure report; the opportunity for full participation by the Faculty in major planning exercises; access by a Member to any file containing confidential and personal information about that member). Transparency shall extend to matters before the Board of Directors, and College Council, and the meetings of standing committees and subcommittees.

We understand this to mean that contractually faculty participation in these decisions must adhere to our existing governance structures. Recommendations for and support for changes must come from the currently existing bodies of Faculty and College Council. These bodies must have a decisive say in their reform and/or continued existence. We are particularly wary of the

circular process in which a brand new body, the Academic Council, creates itself, determining its membership, and setting its own mandate. New governance bodies should not self-ratify. Therefore, we expect that recommendations for such significant changes be discussed and supported by a vote in both Faculty and College Councils. At this time, discussion and vote in Faculty and College Councils are the only processes that fit the principles of collegial governance which is at the root of the university governance and confirmed in the faculty's collective agreement.

We note the Tausig-Ford Report also supports this position stating on page 19, that “it would be most effective to make this change collegially, *with College Council recommending the change to the Board*” (emphasis added). This report is addressed to the Executive Committees of Faculty and College Councils clearly indicating that both Councils should have a role in discussing and reviewing the recommendations made in the report. In closing, the report calls for a collegial process (p. 20), a process that must adhere to existing governance practices to guarantee the legitimacy of the recommended reforms.

Second, we expect a careful review of any proposed structural changes in reference to the creation of schools. Such changes must recognize and seriously account for existing collective agreements. As with the governance changes, these organizational and operational changes should be presented to College and Faculty Councils for approval. There are a number of areas where the proposed creation of Schools intersects with the collective agreement between King's and faculty. For example:

1. Academic departments are a fundamental structure within the collective agreement. The term “department” appears in the collective agreement 122 times, predominantly referring to the role of department chairs and their responsibilities for coordinating and overseeing faculty work in teaching and research. Section 19 of the collective agreement explicitly deals with departmental chairs and program coordinators. The redistribution of responsibilities between chairs, coordinators and directors of Schools necessitates a meticulous review and renegotiation with KUCFA regarding the inclusion of directors of Schools, the redistribution of responsibilities, compensation, and teaching load reductions. This is explicitly a contractual issue which demands the fulsome and transparent participation of KUCFA.
2. Further consideration must be given to the collective agreement language regarding program redundancy and the redeployment of resources. Section 15.1 states,

Program termination means a decision by the Board of Directors to terminate a program or department in King's for reasons other than financial exigency. The decision to terminate a program or department may be made where the academic interests of King's suffer

because reduced student demand or social need for the program is coupled with a demand or need in another program which cannot be fulfilled without redeployment of resources. A recommendation for a program or department termination shall be initiated at the Educational Policy Committee and shall be supported by a two-thirds majority of Faculty Council.

While there has been assurance given that departments will continue to exist within the Schools, we view the current proposal as a significant redeployment of resources. Therefore, we expect that the process must follow the procedure outlined in section 15, which mandates a vote and recommendation from EPC and a two thirds majority vote from Faculty Council or the new Academic Council.

To encapsulate KUCFA's expectations in a phrase from one of our members, "nothing about us without us."

Overall, we expect the following,

- Strict adherence to and respect for the principles of collegial governance, bicameralism, and the associated democratic practices. KUCFA's primary interest is that the process follows existing governance procedure with the full participation of faculty in decision-making.
- Recognition that the current recommendations have implications for the collective agreements of the employee associations and the faculty union at King's. There must be full scrutiny of organizational and operational changes not only in light of the University-College's goals and strategic plan, but also in light of existing collective agreements. This scrutiny needs to be done within a framework of conflict resolution, ethical leadership, and inclusive management all guided by Equity, Diversity, Inclusivity and Decolonization principles.
- Effective and transparent communication and documentation, including the presentation in writing of a clear timeline for the process and its various phases. Further to this we expect clear protocols and specifics as to how the changes will be evaluated and measured over time, and an appropriate and clear cost analysis for the implementation of the Schools model.
- Transparency, accountability, and a process of meaningful participation are needed to address the culture of mistrust that has grown at King's. Adherence to established decision-making processes and real participation, as recognized in the collective agreement, is a step forward in the building of good-will and trust within the community.



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Respectfully and in solidarity,

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