



October 31, 2013

To: All U of C academic staff

From: Paul Rogers, TUCFA President

**Re: Alarming U of C administration plan ("Be afraid ... be very afraid")**

Dear Colleagues

I am writing to you following an emergency meeting (on 29<sup>th</sup> October) of the Board of Directors of the Faculty Association to seek your support in opposing the plan of the U of C administration to contract with a third party to deliver a "*foundation year*" program on campus. Your Board has unanimously affirmed that this plan fundamentally conflicts with the integrity of the University's academic work and must be resisted strongly through all means necessary.

If you were not a member of General Faculties Council (GFC) in June, or are not one currently, you likely would not have heard anything about this plan until last week when an article on the topic appeared in the *The Gauntlet* (the U of C's independent student newspaper) [available [here](#)]. Administration's plan involves a for-profit third-party corporation occupying space on campus and teaching international students who do not initially qualify for direct entrance to the U of C. Courses taught might include some aimed at improving English language skills, others aimed at filling gaps in the academic background of students, but would also include a ***full set of for-credit courses equivalent to first year in certain programs***. After successfully completing all courses, these students would be given credit for completing first year and move directly into the second year of a program in a U of C faculty, hence the program as a whole is typically referred to as a "*foundation year*" (or sometimes a *pathway program*).

In brief the Association's most significant concerns with allowing a third party onto campus in this manner are the following:

- Such a third-party contract is in violation of the *Post-Secondary learning Act* and of the *Collective Agreement*, and involves a mass contracting out of the work of academic staff.
- A third-party contract removes control of and authority over academic standards and the quality of academic programs and courses from academic staff, departments, and faculties.
- A third-party contract puts the University of Calgary's reputation for high-quality education at risk. Damage to this reputation affects the careers of both academic staff and students.
- Individuals hired by a third party to teach would not be members of the Association and thus not be afforded the rights and protections of the *Collective Agreement*, including academic freedom.

Please do not be fooled by yesterday's *UToday* item [available [here](#)] on the foundation year program that suggests: (i) this plan is the result of a thorough fair and balanced evaluation of the options available for delivery of a foundation year; (ii) that administration has not already made its decision; and (iii) the administration has been committed all along to a lengthy and careful consultation. In the opinion of the Association none of these three is true (see the *Additional Background Material* attached to this letter for the basis of this opinion).

Given the serious negative consequences that implementation of this plan will have, the Association is issuing the following call-for-action that I hope each of you will seriously consider:

- 1) For academic staff members in **Arts, Science, Engineering** (Schulich School), and **Business** (Haskayne School), please be aware that the document that went to GFC in mid-October [available [here](#)] suggests that programs in your faculties are to be the initial targets of the third-party foundation year. The Association urges you to attend the special faculty council meetings that we are told will be held at which the Provost will be present to speak about this plan, and make your opposition to it clear.
- 2) For **all academic staff members** across campus the Association urges you to contact the GFC representatives for your faculty/unit [list available [here](#)] and to ask them to make your opposition to this plan clear when it returns to GFC.
- 3) If your teaching schedule permits, you are strongly encouraged to attend the Association's meeting on **Tuesday, November 5, 2013 at 12 p.m. (noon) in Biological Sciences, Room 587 (BI587)** at which concerns with third-party foundation year programs will be discussed in greater depth. David Robinson, Associate Executive Director of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) will be sharing his expertise on this sort of program worldwide and this is an excellent opportunity for you to find out more.

In closing, please note that the Association is not opposed to the development and delivery of a foundation year program, but this needs to be done **internally** (the home-grown approach) and not by a third party. Academic control of the quality and integrity of the U of C's programs must not be ceded to a third-party.

Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns with what the Association is asking you to do on this critically important issue.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Paul Rogers

President, The University of Calgary Faculty Association (TUCFA)

## Additional Background Information

First, here is a brief factual chronology of the origins and nature of administration's plan.

- In February 2012 GFC approved the U of C's *Academic Plan*, which included a "tactic" to increase international enrolment to 10% of the undergraduate population by the 2015-16 academic year.
- In December 2012 GFC approved the U of C's *International Strategy*, which preserved the 10% target. As part of this strategy an 8-person committee was struck to thoroughly investigate the two options, i.e. home-grown or third-party, for delivering a *foundation year / pathway program*.
- In June 2013 this committee provided an 8-page report to GFC that recommended the third-party route for delivery of the foundation year [available [here](#)].
- In October 2013 a follow-up 6-page document was presented to GFC that included a timeline to have the third-party route approved by GFC on 14<sup>th</sup> November [available [here](#)].

If you have read yesterday's *UToday* item on the foundation program [available [here](#)] you might be thinking that the U of C is in the early stages of looking at this, so there's no reason to be concerned. If so, please consider the merits of the following rebuttal of some of the content in the article, in the opinion of the Association:

1. The article suggests that the report provided to GFC in June was a fair and balanced one. However, the recommendation arrived at (i.e. to go the third-party route) was reached without considering in any detail the many concerns with the third-party approach, while the home-grown option was prematurely rejected. Note also that the committee that produced this report included not a single member of the academic staff (the subcommittee was chaired by the Provost and four other members of it were direct members of the Provost's team).
2. The article suggests that administration is "*committed to consulting with our university community on the possibility of a third-party providing recruitment services ... before deciding if a formal proposal on a third-party program should go forward to General Faculties Council and our Board of Governors*". Please be aware that the February 2014 consultation deadline mentioned in the article is fully three months later than the one in the document that went to GFC in October. Had the Association not strongly objected to administration's plan at GFC on 17<sup>th</sup> October, and had there not been some negative press coverage of the meeting, then the third-party plan would have been going to GFC for a hasty approval before the end of 2013.
3. The article suggests that administration has not already made up its mind on pursuing a third-party contract. Please see Riley Hill's article in the 24<sup>th</sup> October *Gauntlet* [available [here](#)] that deals with the October GFC meeting. The following extracts are of particular relevance:
  - a. *Marshall said administration hopes to go ahead with the college soon to avoid a long debate.*
  - b. *"I'm not interested in a long, lengthy debate on this issue," Marshall said. "It's not good for the academy to spend a lot of time focusing on an issue that might be divisive."*
  - c. *No decision has been made on **which** corporation would run the college, although during her presentation, Marshall said administration was looking at firms from Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia. [Note: emphasis added.]*