

Open Letter from Kwantlen Polytechnic University's Faculty of Academic and Career Advancement

The faculty members belonging to the Faculty of Academic and Career Advancement are seeking your support.

We are the departments that offer Adult Basic Education (the ACP department), English as a Second/Additional Language (the ELS department), and Adult Special Education (the APPD department). We are facing the discontinuation of our Faculty and the elimination of our unique voice in governance, and the reduction or elimination of supports for our students. We are also facing the elimination of programming specifically aimed at literacy students. All of this is happening without consultation and without following University policy and the University Act.

This sets a dangerous precedent for all teaching faculty, students, departments, Faculties, and staff at KPU.

We suggest that before taking such severe actions, it is incumbent upon the senior leadership of KPU to undertake collegial and consultative action, as academic leaders rightly should. They must provide detailed evidence and a logical, coherent, evidence-based rationale for their actions. Furthermore, we suggest that they must show how these contemplated moves have solid academic governance and educational grounding. These actions must follow the strict letter as well as the overarching spirit of University policy and the [University Act](#).

We ask that you join us in communicating to the KPU senior leadership, [Dr. Alan Davis](#) and [Dr. Salvador Ferreras](#), that these actions must cease immediately, pending appropriate collegial consultation, including

1. Adherence to appropriate University Policy and process,
2. Undertaking of appropriate consultation as per the University Policy, and
3. The provision of appropriate evidence within that consultation as per the University Policy.

Here's what has happened, in more detail:

On October 29, 2018, KPU's president, Dr. Alan Davis, fired Patrick Donahoe, Dean of Faculty of Academic and Career Advancement (ACA), without providing a rationale to the University community.

On November 6, 2018, Dr. Salvador Ferreras, KPU's Provost and Vice President, Academic, informed the teaching faculty and staff of ACA that their Faculty would be eliminated by splitting ACP and moving it to different Faculties, moving the ELS department to a different Faculty, eliminating the Continuous Intake (CI) programming model in ACP that supports literacy students, and then initiating procedures to discontinue the ACA Faculty once APPD is the lone remaining department. These actions are in direct contravention of University [Policy and Procedure GV9](#).

We contend these actions directly contravene the [University Act](#). The powers and duties of Faculties under the Act include the right to determine what courses of instruction are offered within their Faculties. ACA was not consulted on the elimination of ACP and ELS. The receiving Faculties were not consulted on the inclusion of ACP and ELS.

The unilateral actions of KPU President Dr. Alan Davis and Provost and Vice President, Academic, Dr. Salvador Ferreras function to actively eliminate the representation of ACA teaching faculty and students in the governance structure of KPU.

Dr. Davis's and Dr. Ferreras's actions will result in

- i. The elimination of a Faculty Dean to represent the shared values of ACA.
- ii. The elimination of the ACA Faculty Council and its five Standing Committees that are devoted to representing our student population and shared values.
- iii. The elimination of all unique Senate representation of our student population and shared values.
- iv. The elimination of representation on all Senate Subcommittees where faculty members can advocate for ACA students.
- v. The fragmentation of ACP/ELS/APPD departments and thus their unified voice.
- vi. The elimination or reduction of a dedicated Dean's Office staff who have taken on extraordinary duties in the service of students.
- vii. The elimination or reduction of a dedicated ACA advertising budget dedicated to serving the ABE/ASE/ESL community by sharing information about our programs.

- viii. The elimination or reduction of the dedicated ACA Academic Advisor who serves, advises, and supports ACA students and faculty.

KPU's legislated role as a Special Purpose Teaching University (SPTU), as stated in Section 47.1 of the [University Act](#) and in its [2018 Mandate letter](#) from the Minister of Advanced Education, is as follows:

"A special purpose, teaching university must ... provide adult basic education (ABE), ... English as a second language (ESL), and adult special education (ASE) programs that meet the needs of its designated region...."

The other SPTUs in British Columbia have distinct Faculties akin to ACA that house these developmental programs. This amalgamated Faculty model is supported by robust research evidence as the best administrative model to serve the unique needs of upgrading students. As the subject matter experts in this field, we maintain that our Faculty must be kept whole to best ensure educational access and opportunity for our student population.

The proposed elimination of our literacy programming is especially alarming.

At a time when our region desperately requires ABE, Dr. Davis and Dr. Ferreras plan to eliminate the Continuous Intake program which offers numeracy and literacy programs to our region's most marginalized population in a way that allows students to enroll at any time and complete their upgrading at their own pace. This individualized mode of instruction is the best option for people with low levels of literacy and/or numeracy, and it works particularly well for adults returning to school who juggle family and employment obligations. We have successfully offered ABE this way at KPU (and at Douglas before Kwantlen was formed) since 1975, but the current senior leadership sees no value in this unique, evidence-based delivery model of literacy education, and it would appear they see no value in literacy education at all.

According to Craig Alexander, in his 2007 report on Canada's literacy problem, "[Literacy Matters](#),"

... [A] high level of literacy is an absolute necessity for today's knowledge-based economy. It is the foundation on which other skills are developed and it enables individuals to keep pace with the changing times....Higher literacy can boost the economic and financial success of individuals and the economy as a whole. It can reduce poverty, improve health, lift community engagement and lead to a higher

standard of living. In fact, it is hard to identify any other single issue that can have such a large payoff to individuals, the economy and society. (16)

Currently, relative to the number of adults in our region who lack a high school diploma or English language skills, or who struggle with a learning disability, KPU offers:

- less than one-quarter of the Adult Basic Education seats it should offer
- less than one-fifth of the English language training seats it should offer
- about one-third of the special education seats it should offer

According to the Conference Board of Canada's report on adult literacy, "[Forty-eight per cent](#) of Canadian adults have inadequate literacy skills—a significant increase from a decade ago." Furthermore, "[four out of ten](#) Canadian adults have literacy skills too low to be fully competent in most jobs in our modern economy."

KPU's ABE, ESL, and ASE programs are crucial to the social and economic health of our region. These programs need to be expanded, funded, and supported, not divided, starved, and marginalized.

We thank you in advance for your help and support in holding management accountable to policy and process, KPU's mandate, our students, and our shared university-wide values of transparency, open communication, and pedagogic decision making.