

Mr Edward Astle
Chair of the Board of Governors
The University of Manchester

30th May 2017

Dear Mr Astle and Members of the Board of Governors

We are writing as Professors (198 of us) in the University to raise our concerns about the 171 redundancies that are being proposed by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) under the M2020 strategy. The proposals were outlined in a letter from the President to all staff on 10th May and we are now told that the SLT wants the negotiations completed by the end of June. We would be grateful if you would share this letter with the rest of the Board and ask for the plan to be paused and the threat of compulsory redundancy removed, so that all stakeholders can develop a more measured, carefully planned and less confrontational strategy.

The proposals put forward by the SLT and previously approved were justified with the assertion that they would secure the future financial sustainability of the University, improve the student experience and create the financial headroom for strategic investment. However, in our view the proposed redundancies are unjustified and are being imposed in an ill-considered way that will massively damage the morale of staff, their commitment to the University and its national and international reputation.

Management has made power point presentations to staff but the SLT has not provided us with any public, detailed, evidence-based justification for its actions; and, if the SLT has not provided the Board with such a plan, that surely raises issues about governance. Given the scale and scope of the changes, we could reasonably expect a substantial report containing a problem definition, laying out evidence and choosing amongst several alternative courses of action with financial costs. This is what SLT expects from those of us in operating units when asking for investment; why does SLT not apply the same standards to justifying M2020?

We do know there is no urgent financial requirement to reduce the academic headcount at the University. The financial statements, which you signed off as Chair of the Board, show we have a healthy operating surplus and sufficient reserves to meet most unforeseen eventualities. It has also been conceded that the financial savings from making 171 staff redundant and then re-employing 100 additional staff are negligible in an institution that has a £1 billion turnover.

Further, events in recent years have raised increasing doubts about SLT's ability to formulate and execute strategy as it must if it is to outperform other Russell

Group Universities and become a world class institution. We are concerned about the abortive restructure of IT services in 2015, which led to the embarrassing breakdowns in IT systems at the beginning of this academic year, the failed REF strategy in 2014 and the failure to evaluate the results of previous restructures undertaken since 2011.

The SLT determined the REF 2014 entry strategy which led to a loss of HEFCE grant income so that the University is worse off by £14.3 million in the first year with losses cumulating over the six years until the next REF. We also note that in the six years from 2011-16, the University spent £25 million pounds on restructuring and early retirement. We note that senior management has not accepted any responsibility for the REF outcome nor has it commissioned any independent evaluation of past restructuring programmes before embarking on another larger redundancy programme.

We are also concerned that the £1 billion rebuilding programme has increased non-staff costs in a way that is uncontrolled and has not been scrutinised sufficiently. The University has made very little disclosure but the total cost of the programme in lost income or service charges can be estimated at least £40 million each year for 40 years. The accounts show that cash interest charges in 2016 already stand at £30 million.

When pressed in meetings, management falls back on the argument that their proposals are necessary to deal with underperformance. Any organisation should have properly managed procedures to deal with under-performance by individuals without resorting to blanket redundancy projects. The criteria that are being used to identify underperforming units are poorly defined and will not allow the principled selection of individuals. The selection of staff 'at risk' of redundancy is based on narrow metric criteria, whilst the use of such metrics (even in more sophisticated forms) has been entirely rejected by the REF panels. Individuals are now being panicked into taking voluntary severance because, if too few colleagues take the voluntary offer, the rump will get the bare statutory minimum.

Of course, this university needs to improve its performance in crucial areas like teaching. But, the reasons for our poor scores in the NSS, which will underpin the TEF, are complex and include poor infrastructure, poor student feedback, how teaching is organised and how students interact with their teachers. Our staff student ratios are broadly in line with our full service competitors like Warwick and there is no evidence that culling staff and reducing student cohorts will improve the quality of teaching or the metrics for student experience, attainment, retention and employability which count in the new TEF. It is likely that the widespread damage to staff morale associated with the proposed redundancies will be detrimental to the student experience.

From the argument and evidence above, our conclusion is that SLT is adept at blaming the staff and is not taking its share of responsibility for performance. On M2020, SLT is behaving in an ill-considered and unjustified way.

In consequence, we and a substantial number of other academics have no confidence in senior management. We have all invested significantly in our university and are concerned about the significant damage to internal staff morale and external reputation, which will follow inevitably if the Board does not restrain the management.

Yours sincerely

Philip Alexander, Mona Baker, Joe Bergin, Suzy Butters, Stuart Campbell,

Eleanor Casella, Kate Cooper, David Denison, Laura Doan, Patricia Duncker,

Martin Durrell, David Fanning, Paul Fouracre, Vivien Gardner, Peter Gatrell,

Roy Gibson, Hal Gladfelder, Maj-Britt Mosegaard Hansen, John Healey,

Tony Jackson, Matt Jefferies, David Langslow, Daniel Langton, Margaret Littler,

David Lomas, Daniela Caselli, Peter Knight, Andrew Koontz-Garbo,

David Matthews, Hilary Owen, Stephen Parker, Tim Parkin,

Luis Perez-Gonzalez, Christopher Perriam, Peter Pormann, Ian Reader,

Lucia Sa, Alexander Samely, Eva Schultze-Berndt, Zahia Smailsalhi,

Penny Summerfield, Stephen Todd, Vera Tolz, Nigel Vincent, Janet Wolff,

Jackie Stacey, Yangwen Zheng, Judith Aldridge, Margaret Brazier,

Rodney Brazier, David Gadd, Soren Holm, Yenkong NgangjohHodu,

Robert Thomas, Luis Araujo, Gibson Burrell, Naomi Chambers, Paul Cousins,

Tony Dundon, Julie Froud, Damian Grimshaw, John Hassard, Damian Hodgson,

Helge Hoel, Chris Holland, David Holman, Debra Howcroft, Paula Hyde,

Adam Leaver, Sue Llewellyn, Ann Mahon, Miguel Martinez-Lucio, Leo McCann,

Andrew McMeekin, Maria Nedeva, Brian Nicholson, Antony Paulraj,

Tudor Rickards, Jill Rubery, Anne Stafford, Theodor Stewart, Alistair Sutcliffe,

Kieran Walshe, Richard Whitley, Graham Winch, Trevor Wood-Harper,

Mo Yamin, Judy Zolkiewski, Damian O'Doherty, Tarani Chandola,

Jeanette Edwards, Rachel Gibson, Yoram Gorlizki, Maia Green, Kevin Morgan,

James Nazroo, Yaron Matras

Wendy Olsen, Dimitris Papadimitriou, Matthew Paterson, James Pattison,

Ian Plewis, Ludi Simpson, Peter Wade, Alan Warde, Georgina Waylen,

Armando Barrientos, Helen Colley, Tim Jacoby, Maria Kaika, Uma Kothari,

Ruth Lupton, Olwen Mcnamara, Kunal Sen, Erik Swyngedouw, Julian Williams,

Phil Woodhouse, Bob Wood, Andrew Masters, Peter Payne, Colin Webb,

Ross King, Allan Ramsay, Joshua Knowles, Terry Brown, Ray Burgess,

Colin Hughes, Roy Wogelius, Peter Aczel, Jitesh Gajjar, Jeff Paris, Goran Peskir,

Dominique Laurence, Richard Battye, Mike Birse, Ian Browne,
Philippa Browning, Philip Dawson, J Lu, Andrew Murray, Apostolos Pilaftsis,
Niels Walet, , Richard Baines, Amanda Bamford, Matthew Cobb,
Chris Grant, Michael Preuss, Viki Allan, Diana Mitlin, Wes Sharrock
Dean Jackson, Anthony Jones, Chris Klinkenberg, Ivan Leudar, Simon Lovell,
Martin Lowe, Andrew Mayes, Nikolaos Papadopoulos, Graham Pavitt,
Andreas Prokop, David Robertson, John Aplin, Isobel Braidman, Daniel Brison,
Ian Burney, Hugh Devlin, David Eisner, George Hart, Julian Yates,
Leon Aarons, Katherine Checkland, Stuart Turley, Eelena Liven, Joanna Neill
Kathryn Abel, Peter Callery, Ann Caress, Chris Dickinson, Stuart Donnan,
Rachel Elliott, Richard Emsley, Graham Dunn, , Alison Gurney,
Christine Hallett, Dick Heller, Sue Kirk, Geoffrey Margison, Katherine Payne,
Roseanne Mcnamee, Chris Roberts, Jennifer Shaw, Alys Young, Raymond Agius,
Andy Vail, Mike Prest, Martie Van-Tongeren,
Aneez Esmail, Karel Williams