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Mr Edward Astle
Chair of the Board of Governors
The University of Manchester
Manchester M13 9PL

11th July 2017

Dear Mr Astle,

We are writing to you prior to Wednesday's meeting of the Board of Governors on behalf of our members to ask you to share this letter about the M2020 programme with members of the Board. Our hope is that the Board will then better understand academic staff discontent about the M2020 programme and UCU's dismay over the actions and positions of management in the consultation process. We think it is important that the Board understands that all this is not some temporary upset that we will work through but a fundamental threat to staff morale, bargaining arrangements and the reputation of the University of Manchester.

The Senior Leadership team is unlikely to brief the Board on the strength of opposition to the M2020 proposals within the University and we would therefore ask you to note the following indicators of the breadth and depth of staff discontent:

- 240 professors have now signed the letter Professors Esmail and Williams sent to the Board on 30th May. It is quite unprecedented for around one third of the professoriate in a Russell Group University to declare "no confidence" in management.
- Over 100 members of staff in SALC have signed an open letter to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) for the University.
- Numerous further letters and emails have been sent to the SLT and Heads of School by individuals and groups of staff including PhD students, Teaching Assistants and other Early Career Academics.
- Members have attended meetings called by UCU and the other campus trade union in unprecedented numbers and management have faced stiff criticism in School Board meetings in FBMH, SALC and AMBS.
- Over 90% of UMUCU members said in our recent e-ballot that they would be willing to take industrial action if the threat of compulsory redundancies is not withdrawn. This is exceptional given that UMUCU is the largest UCU branch in the country, and the 62% turnout was higher than two out of the last five UK general elections and 139 constituencies in the 2017 election.
- Over 6000 people have signed the "Scrap staff redundancies at University of Manchester" change.org petition set up by Resist Restructuring Manchester.

The Senior Leadership Team sets great store by the annual Staff Survey. The 2017 survey closed before the 171 redundancies were announced and indicates that the SLT already had a problem even before that announcement. Some 93% of respondents in the 2017 Survey said the University is a good place to work but only 47% said they thought the SLT listens to and responds to the views of staff. This was the lowest satisfaction level for any question in the 2017 survey and 4% down on the satisfaction level in the 2016 survey. If you consider the hard evidence of current discontent listed in the bullet points, the implication is that the SLT “listens and responds” rating would most likely now be around 10%.

The M2020 programme is not only an internal wound, but also been an external disaster because it has produced a slew of publicity that has inflicted serious reputational damage on the University. The media coverage is indicative of this; we attach the following links, which are by no means exhaustive of the media coverage, so Board members can judge for themselves: [North West Tonight](#) and [News website](#), [ITV News website](#), [Manchester Evening News 1](#), [Key 103 News](#), [Guardian 1](#), [Huffington Post](#), [The Times](#), [BBC News](#), [Times Higher Education](#), [Guardian 2](#), [Daily Mail](#), [Guardian 3](#), [Manchester Evening News 2](#), [Daily Telegraph](#), [Times Higher Education 2](#).

In general, the predisposition of British media is to support management in any kind of industrial dispute. But, quite notably, in the case of M2020 at the University of Manchester, even right wing newspapers have reported the facts and given equal space to the trade union case. You will see that the media make much of how the SLT could find an honorary appointment for George Osborne in a university that is sacking staff. Headlines like the MEN’s, “George Osborne has ANOTHER job”, are a PR disaster for our University.

From a trade union point of view, we would add that we are hugely dismayed by the actions and positions of SLT, Faculty and School managements in the consultation process as they have failed to provide a school by school rationale for M2020 and throughout have behaved in an uncompromising, top-down way. We are told M2020 is about moving the University from “good to great”, but the consultations have gone from bad to worse.

We have no confidence the SLT will brief the Board on the progress of these consultations and our reasoned opposition to what is being proposed and implemented. So we will below summarise the outstanding issues, as set out in the [Failure to Agree notice](#) sent to the President last week, and ask the Board to raise them one by one with management:

I+II. *Declaration of a proposal to implement compulsory redundancies without the necessary approval of specifics from the Board of Governors:*

Please note that on 28th May Senate was told by its six representatives on the Board that it has not agreed to the M2020 compulsory redundancies, and yet over 900 staff have been told that they must either apply for Voluntary Severance (VS) – in the case of PSSD staff within the next three weeks – or be at risk of compulsory redundancy. It is entirely true that the possibility of redundancy is enshrined in statute and may have been endorsed by the Board. However, the pressing of M2020 redundancies (without specific Board approval) is simply a way of putting maximum pressure on staff in order to coerce them into taking VS.

III+IV *Premature opening of the Voluntary Severance (VS) scheme before there has been an opportunity to consult meaningfully over selection criteria:*

VS has been opened before the criteria for selecting staff for compulsory redundancy in each of the seven areas affected have been properly discussed let alone shared with staff at risk so they can assess how vulnerable they may be if too few in their respective area takes VS. The criteria are also thoroughly confusing: Senate was told last week that the M2020 proposals have “nothing to do with underperformance”, yet every one of the draft selection criteria for academics are based on measures relating to teaching and, especially, research performance.

III+IV *Unfairness in the way the VS scheme and at-risk pools are being implemented:*

Some staff who might wish to take VS, which would help safeguard the jobs of others in the same area, are not allowed to do so, while others, in particular medical consultant academics in FBMH, are protected because it is claimed to be too “complex” and “legally impossible” to make them redundant because they also have honorary contracts with NHS Trusts, so others must go to reduce costs. Complexity is no excuse for not being fair and reasonable and we, and everyone we have consulted for advice, dispute the claim that medical consultant academics are immune from redundancy and would not, if made redundant by the University, be offered substantive contracts with the NHS to make up for their loss of university work. Similarly, the rationale for the pool sizes in AMBS and SALC have been found wanting by both ourselves and staff in those Schools, but all such criticism has been brushed aside. In addition, there is little sign that the University is doing anything to address Equality & Diversity issues identified in its own Equality Impact Assessments.

V *Failure to engage in meaningful collective consultation to avoid and reduce the number of staff at risk of redundancy:*

It has become apparent to us in our discussions with HR and Faculty and School Leadership Teams, and indeed in the President’s report and recommendations to Staffing Committee of 12th April, that there is too little understanding of the distinction between avoidance and reduction in the number of redundancies and mitigation of redundancies. In particular, it has too often been claimed that the VS scheme will mean redundancies can be avoided, whereas VS can only mitigate redundancies. Avoiding and reducing the number of redundancies is achieved through, for example, natural wastage, redeployment and holding back new appointments, as set out in the University’s *Security of Employment Policy*. Sadly, the University is not following its *Security of Employment Policy* properly, otherwise it might have been opened with the Campus Trade Unions in time to avoid the necessity of issuing a Section 188 notice and the threat of compulsory redundancies.

It would be helpful if the Board could hold the SLT to account on these issues and report back to all academic staff – especially those at risk who have lively fears about arbitrary selections being made after rushed processes with management who are unable or unwilling to explain selection criteria.

Meanwhile, our union has failed to reach agreement on substantial points in our formal consultation meetings with management and the Senior Leadership Team has failed to assure us that there will be no compulsory redundancies. UCU’s Regional Support Officer, Marie Monaghan,

wrote last week to Dame Nancy Rothwell activating the local Dispute Resolution Procedure under our Trade Union Recognition Agreement with the University. This “Notice of a Failure to Agree” can be found on the UMUCU blog [here](#) together with a [Briefing](#) sent by UCU last week to 32 Greater Manchester MPs and Andy Burnham, the Mayor of Greater Manchester.

As you will know, a Failure to Agree notice is the first step in the process towards a trade dispute and then industrial action, which would of course be enormously damaging to the University. We regret having to escalate the dispute in this way but feel we have been pushed into a corner by management and have no alternative. We are of course willing to meet and negotiate meaningfully to find a compromise involving managed change in size and shape of schools over several years and hope that you will encourage SLT to take up our offer.

Yours sincerely,

The UMUCU Executive Committee

cc.

President & Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Dame Nancy Rothwell

Will Spinks, Registrar & Secretary

Martyn Moss, UCU Regional Official

Marie Monaghan. UCU Regional Support Official