



Ottawa, Friday November 27, 2015

OPEN LETTER

To: Members of the Board of Governors' Executive Committee
c/o Kathryn Butler-Malette, Chair
University of Ottawa

Subject: Lack of response regarding compensation increases

Dear Members of the Executive Committee,

On June 30th, APUO, APTPUO, SSUO and CUPE 2626 wrote to you requesting transparency regarding the significant increase in executive compensation of the Vice-President Research, Dr. Mona Nemer. At that time, the unions requested information regarding how such an increase (of 43% or \$118,010.66) could be justified under the law and given the financial constraints as expressed by Vice-President Resources, Marc Joyal.

As unions, we never received a reply to our June 30th letter from the Executive Committee, or from any Board representative whatsoever.

Instead, we were copied on correspondence from Allan Rock to Kathryn Butler-Malette on 13 July, explaining that Dr. Nemer's pay increase was retroactive due to her work from 2011-2014, and that this curious retroactive payment was awarded by another administrator, Dr. Jacques Bradwejn, the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine. We subsequently discovered that Dr. Bradwejn also got a mysterious pay raise, from \$386,998 in 2013 to \$422,572 last year.

Based on the communication between President Rock and yourself, I wrote a follow up letter to Ms. Butler-Malette personally on July 16th. In that letter, I specifically requested some additional information which Dr. Bradwejn had attached to his letter to Mr. Rock, but which Mr. Rock apparently deleted before APUO was given a copy.

I also never received a reply to my July 16th letter, whether from Ms. Butler-Malette, or anyone else at the Board or University.

With respect, why the silent treatment? Other universities in Ontario have confronted difficult questions over executive compensation, without behaving so disrespectfully and dismissively. For example, Amit Chakma, the President of the University of Western Ontario was recently in a scandal for excessive compensation that he received; both he and the university's Board apologized, and he paid back the excess.

Let us be clear: the Board has a legal duty to oversee executive compensation. Therefore, when unions representing the university community ask reasonable questions, of course the Board should give its thoughtful answer. Accountability and good governance require it.

Indeed, I would have thought that the University would share our concerns about excess executive compensation. As Vice-President Joyal himself wrote:

...the University must overcome a structural challenge caused by annual expenditures rising faster than revenues. This is why we must make additional efforts to diversify and increase revenue sources, while limiting expenditure growth, in the coming years... The current fiscal climate of budgetary restraint, federal and provincial, means that our university must innovate and make wise choices for our future... (Marc Joyal, email to all staff, April 30, 2015)

The University will have to further its efforts to balance the budget over the coming years, regardless of the challenges that this may entail... salaries and benefits make up more than 70% of the University's operating budget. If nothing is done, expenditure growth will greatly exceed revenue growth... we will have to ensure strict management of our expenditures throughout the year and take major steps to maintain our financial position in the coming years. (Marc Joyal, email to all staff, May 26, 2015)

The implication is that we are all affected by the budget, and that we all have a part to play in remedying whatever shortfalls might arise. By that logic, all decisions taken by the central administration regarding vast increases in compensation affect us all. Perhaps the excess pay to administrators means that some professors who would like to present their research at a conference will be told that there are no travel funds. Others might be denied teaching assistants even though they are leading large classes. Still others are being informed that scholarly journals cannot be subscribed to because there is not enough money.

This is what is colloquially known as death by a thousand cuts, though clearly the cuts do not affect all members of the university community equally. In the very year that the University claims to have budget problems, Dr. Nemer somehow was paid a large amount retroactively for the past four years – why? – and Dr. Bradwejn got a raise for reasons that have never been explained at all – again, why?

Once again, I ask for a comprehensive response, including to all the issues in my previous correspondence, within five business days.

Regards,



Jennifer Dekker
President, APUO