

Dear Provost Graham and Vice-President Resources Joyal,

We, the executive committees of the Association of Professors at the University of Ottawa and the Support Staff of the University of Ottawa, write to you with our common concerns regarding the increasing workloads of our members and to call for immediate action to address these concerns.

As we are sure that you are well-aware, the workload issues of support staff, professors, and librarians are directly related in at least two ways.

First, there has been a proliferation of “shadow work,” or the displacement of work of someone who is paid specifically to do the work onto people who are paid to do other types of work. Concrete examples of this problem include the introduction of the on-line platform Concur for professional expense reimbursement (PER) and travel claims and the requirement by certain faculties that professors input grades in uOzone. This move to download tasks formerly performed by support staff onto faculty may seem like a simple way to reduce administrative costs: why pay a support staff member to enter data when the end-users can do it on-line themselves? But there are serious flaws with this reasoning. While support staff become experts in performing such tasks leading to cost savings, end-users face a considerable mental burden trying to remember how to navigate systems that they use infrequently. The cost savings incurred by the elimination of support staff jobs do not justify the hidden costs of the increasing burdens on faculty and librarians.

Second, in the context of the hiring freeze of support staff, there has been a rising number of medical leaves among support staff members. Vacant support staff positions are being left open. Remaining support staff are continually asked to “do more with less,” while faculty and librarians are being asked to take on additional administrative tasks to keep units functioning.

We appreciate the fact that an in-depth review of the University’s administrative and support processes is currently taking place, but the current situation is clearly unsustainable. As the fall 2017 letter addressed to David Graham signed by 358 APUO members clearly expressed, “we ask you, as Vice-President Academic & Provost, to show leadership in the face of the current situation by hiring staff able to sufficiently support all professors [and librarians] so that they can devote their time to *their* work,” that is, to complete their core institutional mission of research, teaching, and service to the community. We cannot wait two years for the outcome of the review.

We therefore demand the following:

1. End the hiring freeze of support staff;
2. Fill vacant support staff positions;
3. Make concur optional for PER and other claims;
4. Make the inputting of grades via uOzone optional across all Faculties.

In the interests of increasing the transparency of said review, we ask the following questions:

1. In the event of a vacant position, who is being asked to do the work?
2. While faculty, librarians, and support staff perceive an intensification of workload, the central administration has created more and more positions, and the number of Vice-Deans and other senior administrative positions have proliferated. Over the last five years, how many new senior administrative positions have been created?
3. What is the projected reduction/creation of support staff positions at the Faculty level created by the dismantling of the centralized FGPS? How does the University administration plan to allocate the tasks formerly performed by FGPS staff?
4. An in-depth review of administrative and support processes will greatly benefit from our hands-on experience of organization and workload. How do you intend to include us in this in-depth review?

Yours truly,

Executive Committee APUO

Executive Committee SSUO