

Our Mission

Working together to foster fairness, equality and dignity in support of the advancement of knowledge and the education of students.

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Professor Colin Riordan
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13th December 2018

Dear Professor Riordan,

Transforming Cardiff/Trawsfurfiio Caerdydd

We write in response to your letter of November 29.

We retain a healthy scepticism with respect to the necessity of the cost-savings you seek without, of course, questioning the need for financial sustainability of the institution. We are of course aware of the recruitment controls and voluntary severance scheme, and while, as we have said, we have reservations with respect to their likely efficacy and their potential divisiveness, we are glad you indicate that you are minded to avoid compulsory redundancies. The view of the Universities and College Union (UCU) is that it is within the gift of the employer to plan strategically to ensure that avoiding compulsory redundancies is an achievable outcome; indeed, it is a characteristic and a criterion of good leadership.

Our representatives are engaging with the University's management in a spirit of mutual co-operation, and we share the objective of avoiding compulsory redundancies. Yes, we have met on the occasions you outline. And we would welcome further consultation and discussion. In particular, we would welcome meaningful consultation over the Transforming Cardiff/Trawsfurfiio Caerdydd programme at the stage of the generation and refinement of ideas (rather than being presented with complete and near-final proposals for our comment). We very much see the situation in which we find ourselves as an opportunity for collaborative work in partnership to improve the ways in which we work and in which the University is managed, in order to avoid the necessity for compulsory redundancies

While we would very much welcome such constructive engagement with you, our previous experience, most recently with the MEDIC Forward programme (where an unnecessary and costly redundancy took place), leave us with no alternative but to make contingency plans, should that engagement not result in a situation in which compulsory redundancies can be avoided. We will of course work constructively to avoid that end, but we also have a duty to our members, so we are obliged also to develop a contingency plan, in the event that we are unable to work collaboratively to achieve that objective. We are sure that you will agree

that having such a contingency plan in order to ensure that our most important conditions are met is part of demonstrating effective leadership.

It is to our great regret that our recent experience has been that you have only changed your mind under the considerable pressure exerted by meaningful industrial action. We observe, for example, your repeated insistence late last year that a defined-benefit pension scheme is financially unsustainable, and that a defined-contribution scheme is necessary: while we welcome your more recent change of position, we observe that it took considerable pressure on our part (we are of course still suffering the financial hardship that we had to undergo in order to bring about this change, in order to move towards the resolution of what was in our view an utterly avoidable dispute). Similarly, we regret that you were not able to accept our invitation to another event in which your leadership—including the financial management of the University and the necessity for such large-scale financial savings—could be debated and scrutinized.

No trade union takes industrial action lightly. If at all possible, we wish to avoid the necessity for such action. As we have observed above, it is in your gift to lead and manage the University in such a way that it is possible to avoid compulsory redundancies; it is our intention to do all we can to ensure that they are avoided. You will of course understand that legislation requires us to go through a lengthy process in order to get the necessary authority to pursue industrial action: it is our view that in going through this process we are demonstrating effective leadership and prudent planning to ensure we are able to protect our members' jobs. We are thus writing under separate cover to declare a trade dispute. We remain open to collaborative and constructive dialogue in support of our objective.

Yours sincerely

Cardiff UCU Executive Committee