

May 21, 2021

Laurentian University Library & Archives  
935 Ramsey Lake Road  
Sudbury, ON P3E 2C6

Ana Serrano, President & Vice-Chancellor, OCAD University  
Office of the President, OCAD University  
100 McCaul St, Toronto, ON M5T 1W1

Cc: Caroline Langill, Vice President and Provost Academic, OCAD University  
Cc: Jaime Watt, Chair, OCAD University Board of Governors and  
Cc: Tony White, University Librarian

President Serrano:

The undersigned librarians of the Laurentian University Faculty Association are dismayed by the announcement of a restructuring of the OCAD University Library on May 4th, 2021 that resulted in the notice of termination for four senior librarians:

- Alex Homanchuk, Head, E Resources & E Learning;
- Daniel Payne, Head, Reference & Instructional Services;
- Victoria Sigurdson, Head, Visual Resources & Special Collections;
- Marta Chudolinska, Learning Zone Librarian.

We are particularly disheartened by the lack of collegial governance that was employed in the restructuring plan. Our understanding is that the restructuring was instead driven from the top down by recently appointed University Librarian Tony White who, by his own admission, had met “just two library staff” when he was interviewed for a [Winter 2021 staff profile](#).

Collegial governance is at the heart of effective academic institutions. It requires consultation with those who have developed expertise in their professional areas of specialisation and familiarity with the needs and desires of faculty, staff, students, and programs that can only come with experience. An effective restructuring of a library brings stakeholders and librarians with their professional expertise together to consider the challenges that they face and develop the best possible solutions for the future.

Unfortunately, it seems that Tony White chose to ignore collegial governance when developing his restructuring plans. As a result, OCAD University students, faculty, and staff stand to be deprived of the experience and pedagogical leadership that Daniel, Victoria, Alex, and Marta have demonstrated both within OCAD University and with their colleagues (such as us) around the province who have been grateful to be able to work with them in various roles as part of the Ontario Consortium of University Libraries (OCUL).

We also condemn in the strongest possible terms the blatant attempt of the OCAD University administration to appropriate reconciliation efforts by claiming that the [“new structure aligns with the decolonization approach by flattening hierarchies and promoting a peer-to-peer environment.”](#) As members of an institution that has worked, sometimes haltingly, towards reconciliation with Indigenous peoples for decades, we have developed some awareness and sensitivity to the importance of language and actions. Flippantly appropriating the terminology of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples to defend a top-down non-collegial restructuring is the epitome of colonialist behaviour. OCAD University should be ashamed of this statement and issue an immediate apology for their rhetoric.

In summary, we ask that OCAD University immediately:

- Withdraw the notice of termination for Alex, Daniel, Victoria, and Marta
- Cancel the planned restructuring of the library
- Retract their statement that this restructuring was aligned with “decolonization” and issue an apology
- Initiate a new planning process, based on collegial governance, that recognizes the primacy of professional librarians and builds on their expertise for the best possible outcomes for OCAD University students, faculty, and staff

Sincerely,

Dan Scott, Associate Librarian, Laurentian University  
Alain Lamothe, Associate Librarian, Laurentian University  
Ashley Thomson, Librarian Emeritus, Laurentian University  
Leïla Saadaoui, bibliothécaire adjointe, Laurentian University