



Canadian Association of University Teachers
Association canadienne des professeures et professeurs d'université

BY EMAIL: michelle.anderson@uwo.ca; bucpresident@uwo.ca

September 29, 2023

Dr. Alan Shepard
President & Vice-Chancellor
Western University
Stevenson Hall, Suite 2107
London, Ontario,
N6A 5B8

Dr. Laretta Frederking
President
Brescia University College
1285 Western Road
London, Ontario
N6G 1H2

Dear Presidents Shepard and Frederking:

On behalf of the Canadian Association of University Teachers, I am writing to express how profoundly troubled we are about the recently announced plans to merge Brescia with Western. As I understand it, the Memorandum of Understanding around integration was negotiated without consultation with the Brescia Faculty Association (BFA) or the University of Western Ontario Faculty Association (UWOFA), nor with the Senate.

I am aware that the MOU announced last week is a notice of intent and not entirely legally binding, but it is astounding that the administrations of Brescia and Western could have reached an agreement that includes plans to shift programs and reassign academic staff without consulting with the faculty associations. This failure violates principles of transparency, openness, and the duty to consult in labour relations.

Moreover, it also runs contrary to foundational principles of collegial governance. As you are aware, it has long been established in practice and in Western's own statute that the Senate, as the academic governance body of a university, must exercise the primary responsibility for decision-making on all academic matters. This includes setting the academic mission of the institution, determining programs of study and related curricular matters, establishing academic standards, overseeing long-range academic planning and its implementation, and guiding the academic operations of the institution. This is articulated not just in CAUT policy, but also in the membership criteria of Universities Canada which requires institutions to have an academic governance body in which "authority is vested in academic staff for decisions affecting academic programs."

September 29, 2023

The proposed integration of Brescia into Western implicates matters that must be in the purview of the Senate. According to the terms of the MOU, the merger would see a new foundational program – the “Academy” – developed in addition to the movement and realignment of existing programs. It is therefore deeply disturbing to learn that the administrations negotiated these details without including or consulting with academic staff or the Senate.

The serious concerns raised by this matter beg the question of whether the integration as it is currently being planned should even proceed. If there is a desire to merge Brescia into Western, it should be from the start discussed openly with the Senate and faculty associations so that the academic community can assess the merits and, if agreeing, decide upon how such a merger could be properly managed from an educational perspective. At the very least, it is essential that the faculty associations have effective representation on the integration committee as their members and their rights are directly affected.

As this matter implicates important principles of collegial governance, and subject to any additional information you may provide, CAUT will continue to monitor the situation, work with our faculty associations at Brescia and Western, and determine additional actions as needed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'David Robinson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Robinson
Executive Director

cc: Peter McInnis, CAUT President

Andrew Chater, President, Brescia University Faculty Association achater@uwo.ca

Rachel Heydon, President, University of Western Ontario Faculty Association rheydon@uwo.ca