

To: Regents of the University of Michigan  
UM President Mary Sue Coleman  
UM President-Elect Santa J. Ono  
UM Provost Laurie K. McCauley  
UM-Flint Chancellor Debasish Dutta  
UM-Flint Provost Sonja Feist-Price  
UM-Dearborn Chancellor Domenico Grasso  
UM-Dearborn Provost Gabriella Scarlatta

RE: UM-Flint CAS to CIT Transfers

Dear Colleagues,

Due to recent UM-Flint administrative actions taken without faculty input, SACUA calls for a collective rededication to the principles of shared governance. Without any discussion, the University of Michigan's Board of Regents at their meeting on June 16, 2022 approved a major reorganization of programs at the UM-Flint campus. This reorganization consisted of the transfer of three units—Computer Science, Engineering, and Physics—from the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) to the College of Innovation and Technology (CIT). The transfer occurred with hardly any public knowledge within UM-Flint. It seems that the only people outside of CIT who were aware that this change was mooted were the Provost, Chancellor, and select members of faculty in the three departments. No members of any other departments knew, and even the Interim Dean of CAS was blindsided. There was no public administrative analysis of the reasons for this action at the time, and none has been forthcoming since. Neither the benefits to be gained by this large restructuring and transfer of faculty from one unit to another nor the costs to be incurred have been publicly addressed. Of particular concern are the consequences for the programs left behind. At the June Regents' meeting, the reorganization manifested itself solely through the approval of the personnel transfers of individual faculty. At the meeting, Chancellor Dutta highlighted a number of improvements on the Flint campus that the University of Michigan could be proud of, such as in the School of Education, Health Services, and the MBA program. However, he provided no comment whatsoever on this significant restructuring of two of UM-Flint's colleges. His silence served as the capstone of a process that was rushed and lacked transparency. Most UM-Flint faculty were blindsided by the news of a *fait accompli*, lacking any meaningful opportunity to participate in the deliberation or implementation of this significant decision.

The Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs (SACUA) hereby responds to this situation by incorporating the AAUP statement of July 8, 2022 (attached) from the UM-Flint chapter of the American Association of University Professors. To the AAUP's excellent recommendations, which SACUA endorses, SACUA adds two further considerations.

First, one consequence of this reorganization without discussion with the pertinent faculty is a loss of mission clarity for both CIT and CAS faculty. In his September 2020 action request recommending the creation of CIT (attached), Flint's Chancellor Dutta explained that the CIT “will fill a gap in the technology workforce that exists between vocational technical training offered by community colleges and the science based Bachelor's degree programs in engineering and computer science.” Two years ago no mention was made of the Physics program. More troubling is the lack of discussion regarding both CIT and CAS. How, exactly, would the programs of the transferred units change to reflect the new emphasis on applied skills in technology, rather than the wider scope of the liberal arts that are central to CAS? How, in turn, would this transfer impact the mission of CAS to

provide students with a broad education in science, culture, and society? The Chancellor's old statement emphasized that creating CIT would "fill a gap." To date, no mention has been made of how this transfer from CAS also created a gap. If this reorganization had been transparent and included the perspectives of faculty, these questions might have been addressed—but they were not. The result is organizational confusion on the UM-Flint campus. There remains a need for a detailed, probing, and public reassessment of the impact this transfer has had on the missions and futures of both colleges and both faculties.

Second, the lack of discussion involved in this transfer gives evidence that the UM-Flint leadership sees no need to include the wider faculty even in decisions that will affect them deeply. Rather than supporting a collective process of information and dialogue, the leadership went full steam ahead with its decision to transfer many of CAS's programs to CIT, a surprise decision that impeded faculty participation and drained CAS of a significant number of faculty and several majors. SACUA has heard the message of distrust of the faculty entailed in the leadership's actions. However, SACUA has also heard the message communicated through the Regents' inspired decision to hire President-Elect Santa Ono. To SACUA, this moment is a key opportunity: a time of rededication to, as the AAUP statement underlines, "principles of shared governance" so that together we may find constructive opportunities to further our university's remarkable mission.

As part of that rededication, the faculty must also work toward a more respectful and collaborative relationship with the university's officers. However, tactics such as those recently employed on the UM-Flint campus provide no opportunity to do so. When the Michigan faculty are not invited into the decision-making of the institution that they, as global leaders in education, serve, the outcomes will be negative: distrust, frustration, and organizational confusion. SACUA proposes that, instead, we should turn the page and take a positive stance. This is a chance to address, openly and directly, the latent distrust that is obviously undermining cooperation between the faculty and its leadership, both in UM-Flint and the University of Michigan at large. There is now a key moment in U of M history, a brand new start with a new President; in Ann Arbor, also a new Provost at once. A good beginning would be to start with the AAUP's recommendations. In all three Michigan campuses, the faculty, its leaders, its Regents all need to collaboratively explore the questions this transfer has created. All affected stakeholders need the opportunity to help develop the answers.

Sincerely,



Professor Silvia Pedraza, Ph.D.  
SACUA, Chair



Luke McCarthy, Ph.D., J.D.  
Faculty Senate Office, Director

cc: SACUA; UM-Flint College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) Interim Dean Douglas Knerr; UM-Flint College of Innovation & Technology (CIT) Dean Christopher Pearson; UM AAUP Chapter; UM-Flint AAUP Chapter

Approved by SACUA on August 11, 2022



July 8, 2022

The UM-Flint AAUP chapter condemns the absence of a clear, transparent process regarding the transfer of faculty appointments and programs from the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) to the College of Innovation and Technology (CIT). The substantial shift in curricula and personnel is an administrative action that occurred without meaningful university-wide faculty consultation and it stands in sharp contrast to established past practice on our campus.

Deliberative processes with myriad opportunities for affected and interested faculty to voice concerns and/or support precipitated the creation of the School of Education and Human Services (SEHS) in 1999 and the School of Nursing (SON) in 2016 and also informed consideration of a College of Engineering and Natural Sciences in 2014. CIT's own origins involved an attenuated process that moved away from a fully consultative approach, but there remained avenues for faculty participation. Common to each example was a respect shown toward principles of shared governance. That respect now appears wholly absent.

Instead, similar to the flawed attempt to implement a post-tenure review policy, we once again see an administration without a clear strategy. In this latest series of significant decisions made without broad faculty input, we have yet more evidence of a troubling trend of administrative chaos on our campus that jeopardizes the long-term health of all academic units. And, as enrollment continues to decline at the fastest pace in the institution's history, we hold that our leadership is making unconsidered decisions that distract from this basic and crucial shortcoming.

We acknowledge and support our colleagues in Computer Science, Engineering, and Physics as well as their unanimous desire to join CIT. However, the lack of transparency and coordination at the administrative level has left related departments, faculty, and programs questioning their own futures. Despite this decision being implemented roughly 10 days before the start of a new fiscal year, no budget projections or contingency planning appear to have been made, which is contrary to established practice for new and existing programs and units. It also remains unclear if Faculty Senate Council was consulted about any of this.

We therefore call upon:

- Deans Knerr and Pearson to provide unit-specific financial impact statements regarding the transfer of faculty appointments and programs from CAS to CIT
- Faculty Senate Council to convene and provide faculty governance expectations for such a move
- Chancellor Dutta to provide written justification for the transfer, including why it was done in such a manner and what has changed since CIT's inception when these programs were excluded

In service to shared governance and the UM Faculty Senate Open Governance Resolution, the information requested should be disclosed to all stakeholders and specifically to university-wide faculty.

**THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN  
REGENTS COMMUNICATION**

ACTION REQUEST

SUBJECT: A new College of Innovation & Technology at UM-Flint

ACTION REQUESTED: Creation of a new College of Innovation & Technology

EFFECTIVE DATE: September 17, 2020

**BACKGROUND**

UM-Flint has launched an aggressive new action plan referred to as Project 2020 that outlines a set of actions to help reposition UM-Flint for the next 20 years. Development of new “in demand” programs is an important feature of this plan and the creation of a new College of Innovation and Technology is a centerpiece of Project 2020. The College of Innovation and Technology is solidly aligned with market demands and job placements. It has widespread support from regional industry leaders as well as legislators. Once established, it will only be the state of Michigan’s second program of its kind: a free-standing college of technology. It is expected that this new College will sustainably grow UM-Flint’s enrollment and positively impact the regional economy.

Technology is applied engineering. The College of Innovation and Technology graduates will fill a gap in the technology workforce that exists between vocational technical training offered by community colleges and the science based Bachelor’s degree programs in engineering and computer science. The four-year Bachelor’s degree in College of Innovation and Technology will prepare graduates with technical skills for employment in automotive, manufacturing, AI, health care, aerospace, cybersecurity and other sectors. The UM Flint College of Innovation and Technology will begin with a generous \$10 million gift from the C.S. Mott Foundation.

This is the first college in the history of UM-Flint that will be established from the ground up, i.e., not separating from a progenitor school or college. The College of Innovation and Technology will drive innovation not only within academic programs and degrees offered, but also in its administrative structure and operations. Led by a dean, it will have advisory boards to help maintain programmatic flexibility and responsiveness to changing market needs. The dean of the College of Innovation and Technology will report directly to the Provost. As the College hires new faculty, it will create governing structures through elected faculty, approved by the Board of Regents on the recommendation of the chancellor.

The concept and plans for the establishment of the College of Innovation and Technology were first outlined on Jan 22, 2020 by the Chancellor in his Inaugural Town Hall. Subsequently, it was discussed with deans, faculty and vice chancellors as well as several external stakeholders.

## RECOMMENDATION

I am pleased to recommend the creation of the new UM-Flint College of Innovation and Technology effective September 17, 2020.

Approval of this recommendation will require revisions to several Regents' Bylaws which will be forthcoming and in accordance with the Procedures for the Revision of Regents' Bylaws.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deba Dutta". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Deba Dutta  
Chancellor, University of Michigan-Flint

September 2020