



(sent by email)

Open letter to the attention of Mr. Jacques Frémont,

Mr. Jacques Frémont  
President  
Office of the President  
University of Ottawa  
550 Cumberland, room 212  
Ottawa, Ontario

November 21, 2016

Dear Mr. Frémont,

I'm writing to you on behalf of APUO, which represents 1260 professors and librarians at the University of Ottawa. We wish to share with you our concern facing the proposed library cuts at the University, in particular those affecting our journal subscriptions. Although we understand that the mandate of the Board of Governors is to provide strategic direction to the University, it is our duty to inform you when we consider that these orientations directly threaten the core mission of our institution, which is education and research. Indeed, the \$1,593,312 cuts to the library directly undermine this core mission.

As you know, on October 13, 2016, the Faculty Council of Social Sciences adopted a resolution stating that the administration reaffirms its *Destination 2020* commitment to support the quality of our programs, of our teaching, of our research and of the student experience and that to this end 1) the Board of Governors reverses the cuts announced to the acquisition budget of the library; 2) that if the Board of Governors considers necessary to reduce the budget in the same amount of \$1,593,312 that the cut affects exclusively the three budget categories previously mentioned which, according to the 2016-2017 budget, make up a total of close to \$96 million.

We share this point of view: *Destination 2020* has committed to supporting advanced research and providing the University with a world class library; the budget cuts to the library cannot be made without causing severe harm to research and teaching activities; the university administration has high costs in honorariums and contractual services, in travel and other expenses. In light of this information, we request that you consider other avenues to reduce the budget of the administration instead of cutting the library's acquisitions budget, which would go directly against our strategic plan and the purpose of academic institutions such as ours which is, according to *Destination 2020*, "a world class research university."

Moreover, it is our stance that the Board of Governors has a broad responsibility towards the student experience. The cuts that have been announced will affect our students' access to cutting-edge research, despite yearly increases to their tuition fees. In addition, our graduate students will be directly affected in their capacity to produce high level research.

The proposed cuts are a source of serious worry for students, faculty, librarians, members of the Senate, as well as your colleagues at the Board of Governors. The University of Ottawa enjoys a reputation that

attracts some of the best students and professors from around the world. Library cuts are a hard blow to the University's reputation, its national and international rankings, as well as its capacity to attract and retain the best professors and students. In other words, these cuts are costly in the short, middle and long term. We are convinced that the budget challenges we are currently facing can be resolved without compromising the primary purpose of our university or the reputation we have all worked so hard to build with our best efforts.

We are aware that the announcement of these cuts is taking place within the broader context of the commercialisation of knowledge and increased pricing that affects all academic institutions. In particular, Canadian universities are threatened by the exploitation of major publishing houses. As a member of the Group of Canadian Research Universities, these trends affect us but we also have a capacity to influence the course of events. In this situation, it is more important than ever that universities take the lead in defending access to knowledge. It is important that our entire university community be involved in seeking innovative and long term solutions that preserve – and even expand – access to higher knowledge. To this end, we invite you to work with us in seeking such solutions, in collaboration with Canadian and international partners. Our community could demonstrate its leadership and, in several respects, “defy the conventional.”

In the context of a budget of over a billion dollars, library cuts of under \$2 million represent less than 3% of the administration's budget. Historically, university budgets have fluctuated up to 3% in accordance with the University's needs. Considering the lasting harmful effects of these cuts, we respectfully ask you, Mr. Frémont, to reverse the cuts and work with us on short, medium and long term solutions to the challenges of increased costs to subscriptions that libraries face.

Respectfully,



Jennifer Dekker  
President, APUO