

Dear Frances Corner, SMT and Goldsmiths Council,

We were surprised to hear about the plans for 'Evolving Goldsmiths'. This strategic plan came out of the blue, without any consultation or forewarning. We believe the language and the process run counter to the values of Goldsmiths; values that, on the surface, the plans claim to support. The plans mention 'radical transparency', but the way in which they have been prepared and circulated demonstrates the opposite. We object strongly both to the process and the contents of the plans.

The idea that the 'shadow structure' of the schools needs to be strengthened will most likely lead to increased costs, and further bureaucracy. If the SMT were indeed acting in a transparent manner, they would share the cost projections of this exercise, and provide details of its successive phases. We would also expect those in senior management roles to take responsibility for the recent expansion in the deficit. Creating more senior management posts will not lead to savings - and indeed it is SMT who has 'led' the College during the augmentation of the deficit in the first place. The fact that there is supposed to be a second phase to 'Evolving Goldsmiths', about which we are left entirely in the dark, again undermines the claim of 'radical transparency', and hinders our ability to plan and respond accordingly.

We know from the experience of other universities, most recently SOAS, that VS schemes, school restructurings and a further centralisation of decision-making powers in an SMT that has *not* proven itself as a strategically capable and cooperative manager of college resources, are not solutions to financial and recruitment issues.

Furthermore, the notion that 'curriculum review' and 'module reduction opportunities' are key elements of necessary cost-reduction is not presented with any argument or evidence base. Is there any serious recognition of the pedagogical and intellectual rationales of the offer at the UG and MA levels? There is no evidence that reduction of the number of modules and programmes will result in higher recruitment; if the aim is to make colleagues redundant by shrinking the amount of modules offered this should be stated explicitly.

Compliance with such an ill-defined and poorly communicated strategy (which was conveyed in a video and powerpoint presentation almost entirely devoid of content, especially as regards the College's financial standing) cannot be expected. SMT should first acknowledge its share of responsibility for this state of affairs rather than shifting it to College workers, as implied by the claim that the current predicament is partly a product of a 'strategy that colleagues struggle to embrace'. What is this strategy? And what is the evidence to claim that staff have 'struggled to embrace' it? Similarly, the claim - based on a dubious use of NSS scores to police academics - that the College strategy is demanded by students (even future students!) is not based on any robust evidence, as far as we can see.

The claims that Goldsmiths is a 'community' guided by principles of 'social justice', within which we value our collective work, are contradicted by the very way in which 'Evolving Goldsmiths' has been devised and communicated. What characterises Goldsmiths as a distinctive place is not being respected. SMT will have to do much better if it wants

colleagues to 'embrace' its strategy. We need more than vague 'consultations' and generic rhetoric about our values, 'change' or the 'student experience'. We need clarity and information about finances, policy and strategies that will affect our work and livelihoods, but also our students' learning. Assumptions are made in this strategy about what the student of the future wants and needs: where have these claims and projections come from?

In our view, the student recruitment and retention challenges the College faces will be exacerbated by the strategy outlined in 'Evolving Goldsmiths'. The strategy involves enlarging managerial layers and moving academic planning away from the departments delivering teaching and pastoral care, while effectively reducing and compromising student-facing academic and professional staff. In our own experience, an experienced and capable Departmental Business Manager (DBM), working closely with Heads of Department (HOD) and colleagues, makes an indispensable contribution to the everyday functioning and strategy of the department. Shifting DBM and HOD functions to 'Executive Deans', including with regards to budgeting, and making the DBM role redundant would constitute a pointless waste of precious administrative experience and could result in serious problems - especially as there is no evidence that the centralisation of such functions is likely to resolve any of the College's financial problems. Centralisation of administrative work will also result in deskilling and worsening conditions for administrative staff. Colleagues in professional services, who have faced similar restructures in the past, will likely face increased workload as the knowledge, skills, and relationships that make departments run is fragmented and broken up. Moreover, increasing student numbers and satisfaction is unlikely to result from these changes.

The bigger picture of the imagined role that research will play in the new strategy is also opaque, to say the least. Research funding is a large source of income for some departments and needs an appropriate research administrative infrastructure in order to be managed soundly. In what ways does the SMT imagine that research can continue to play a role in shaping the radical thought and innovative practice, including teaching, for which Goldsmiths is known? The proposed strategy is also likely to have a significant impact on workloads, meaning that research will suffer. Can the SMT tell us if and when UCU and Unison was or will be consulted regarding the strategy?

Given these concerns and objections, we demand that all plans for Evolving Goldsmiths are halted with immediate effect, and a consultation on how to deal with the financial situation the college finds itself in is started as soon as possible. It is important that we don't just hear the performative talk of transparency, community, and social justice, but are actually embedding these principles into the process of consultation. We require an explicit plan for what that involvement actually entails.

We are looking forward to reading your response on Goldmine.

There should be No Evolving Goldsmiths without Involving Goldsmiths.

Yours sincerely,
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