

Goldsmiths Professors' Forum

Dossier of Letters responding to the Warden's Letter of April 6, in support of the Goldsmiths Collective Statement in response to that letter and regarding the damaging Restructuring of Goldsmiths (formerly known as "Evolving Goldsmiths")

17th April, 2020

Goldsmiths Collective Statement

Dear Frances Corner, members of SMT,

We wish to protest the tone and implications of the email letter, “Goldsmiths’ collective response to Covid-19” sent out to all staff on 6 April. In it, you describe the efforts of senior academic staff to secure assurances that ‘Evolving Goldsmiths’ will not be imposed without meaningful consultation as a ‘threat’ rather than as an example of dialogue and good governance. This was not a ‘self-organised group of colleagues’ holding you to ransom, but representatives of the Professors’ Forum who speak for the vast majority of Professors in the College, asking you to confirm how, in what ways and whether you intend to proceed with key aspects of ‘Evolving Goldsmiths’ at this challenging time.

The Professors’ Forum is now being accused of being divisive at a time of national crisis. Yet we believe that it is the Warden and SMT who are being divisive by pushing through a restructure which will not deal with the crises we face but, rather, will do little more than create further highly paid senior management posts while weakening some of the key structures of the College.

We the undersigned support the demand that:

1. The roles of DBMs and HoDs should remain as they are and Departments retain overall financial and academic self-governance.
2. We need transparency given the extent of the budget cuts being imposed on Departments which suggests that compulsory redundancies are planned.
3. In these circumstances, expensive capital projects such as the Enterprise Hub should be stalled for the foreseeable future.
4. A fully democratic, open and accountable process must be devised and implemented for all discussions and decision-making going forward.

Letters

(Ordered according to the approximate time they were received)

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Dear Warden Frances Corner, Dear Chair of Council Dinah Caine, Dear David, Dear Elisabeth, Dear Mark,

Yesterday's email to comms is a gross misrepresentation of our Professors' Forum and the mandate we gave the representatives who spoke with you on Friday. I have signed the collective response that sets the record straight and reiterates our four demands.

Yours, Jan

Jan Plamper
Professor of History

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Dear Professor Corner and members of SMT,

You can no more drive change – change in any worthwhile sense, that is - than direct evolution: these are internal processes, whether in nature or society. This applies to universities as to any other area of human activity. I speak from long experience of teaching in Goldsmiths (and elsewhere), in various capacities, first in what was then the Art School, and latterly in Visual Cultures, where I had a four-year spell as HoD. I have seen quite a few changes, and the truly creative and transformational changes came from below, without plan or design. I could give many examples.

Change driven from above, in the systematic way you propose, is not only incapable of eliciting creative responses, but will actually stifle creativity.

Creative vitality, the unplanned and spontaneous innovation of individuals and of groups acting inventively in response to perceived current needs and concerns – these constitute the life of Goldsmiths and its only true resource. By all means facilitate, nurture, amplify and indeed advertise – or allow to advertise themselves – these creative initiatives and you will help attract students and research funds.

On the topic of student recruitment, the reason for the decline in recent years (demographics aside) is that the moment the government removed the cap on admissions below a specific A-level grade, Russell group universities simply opened

their portals as widely as possible. The answer to this problem – the result of marketization - is certainly not to follow the scheme covertly intended when student loans were introduced, namely to stratify higher education, with a lower tier serving – in an inferior way - those from poorer backgrounds; your initiative will however be understood, correctly, as fulfilling this agenda.

I have read the summary of 'evolving Goldsmiths' and while it reads as a mixture of the managerial and the hortatory, with strange usages such as 'scoping out' (I hope that whoever wrote it is not to be responsible for communications), its main shortcoming is that it is devoid of real content. It does not explain why the measures proposed are suited to attain the ends projected ten years hence, and it says nothing concrete as to the impact on individuals and departments, who appear to have no designated say in any of this. 'Driving change' is hollow rhetoric but it has one concrete meaning, namely coercion.

Were there any evidence of fresh and independent thinking in your proposals, it would be possible to engage with them; what I find instead is the impersonal application of a formula.

Yours sincerely,

Brendan Prendeville

Senior Lecturer
Dept of Visual Cultures

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Subject: Collective Concern for Technicians - Evolving Goldsmiths

Dear Frances, Elisabeth, David, Mark, and Dinah,

I hope this email finds you well during these troubling times.

I am getting in touch to confirm that I have signed the collective response of the Goldsmiths community to the Warden's email letter sent on 6 April. I am a technician in the Department of Theatre and Performance. I am concerned that the structural change proposed by Evolving Goldsmiths will homogenise technical resources within the University and will therefore eradicate the specific expertise required for Goldsmiths' range of creative practical disciplines. The technical processes required for Theatre Making for example are vastly different than what is appropriate for Fine Art or Design. I hope that SMT will appreciate that the expert knowledge and experience of Goldsmiths' technicians are particular to their Departments and are not a generic set of skills that are applicable to all.

Sincerely,
Rachael Champion

Scenography Tutor and Technician
Goldsmiths, University of London
Department of Theatre and Performance

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15th April 2020

Dear Colleagues on SMT,

I am one of the signatories of the letter responding to the Warden's email of 6th April on the Goldsmiths' collective response to Covid-19. I wanted to add to the letter I have signed by writing personally, more in sorrow than in anger, especially to those of you with whom I worked as fellow Heads of Department in past years.

My sorrow comes from the language used in the Warden's email. Apparently 'in the spirit of collective responsibility, inclusivity and collaboration' the Warden used what could only be seen as divisive and provocative language about 'five Professors who said they were advocating on behalf of a self-organised group of colleagues'. Nothing could be further from inclusivity or collaboration than the approach taken here. Using the word 'said' suggests that there is some doubt as to whether they represent the group. There should be no doubt whatsoever that they do. 'Self-organised' suggests that the group might somehow lack legitimacy, when it in fact represents the settled view of the vast bulk of the most senior academic staff in the college. Neither the Professors' Forum nor its steering group deserve to be sneered at in the way that they have been. Nobody serious about 'collective responsibility, inclusivity and collaboration' would even think of doing so.

My perspective on leading change is partly informed by my extensive involvement in politics since the late 1980s. I have seen many leaders do the right thing, build agreement and consensus, and successfully deliver change. We are often told that change is hard, and it often is. But when it is led well, it can actually be invigorating, and people can be persuaded that it needs to happen. What is really hard about change is not people resisting it, but leading it well. The hard work is what the best leaders do well – setting out a vision, consulting with people because it is inherently part of a successful change process, and then reaching agreement on a way forward.

However, I have also seen dreadful examples of leadership failure. The most prominent case is that of Nick Clegg, whom I used to know very well back as far as

his time as an MEP, and with whom I created the 'pupil premium' which is now in place across all state schools. He was someone filled with a vision of change, but it was coupled with a belief that his party simply did not understand why change was necessary. He tried to force the party to drop its commitment to scrapping tuition fees. He then made pledges to the public which he had no intention of keeping, and was then incapable of understanding why the public reacted to him in such a hostile manner. He then spent years blaming internal critics using very similar language to that in the Warden's email. His 'apology' was accompanied by divisive language about how he was the only one who had really understood what needed to be done, and that his regret was that he did not persuade his party of that. The party was destroyed as a serious political force, losing voters in the millions, while many people like myself went elsewhere. This was all driven by a vanguardist approach to leadership, and a refusal to understand that what made the party what it was were the people the leader believed were naïve, foolish and out of touch with political reality. It turned out that in fact all those labels applied to him, not the party members he insulted and derided.

The question for me is whether you want to be like Nick Clegg? I had thought you did not. I thought there were encouraging signs when some decisions on *Evolving Goldsmiths* were delayed for further consultation. I was also really encouraged when Elisabeth Hill took part in a History Department Management Meeting a few weeks ago and made it clear that it had been realised that the process could have been better and that this would change.

On that basis, I would have expected the leadership team to recognise that the proposals which were put by the group of Professors in *Alternative Goldsmiths* were worthy of detailed consideration and constructive response.

There are so many great ideas in the document. My own particular concern is around the structure of schools: are they the right size, do they have the right boundaries? The ideas in *Alternative Goldsmiths* are the product of unprecedented collaboration between Professors across the college and the Professors' Forum represents the vast bulk of some of the most experienced people in the college. Pragmatically, anyone who understands the institution would recognise the value of taking us seriously and working with us.

However, the Warden's email suggests this will not be happening. Please, if you mean anything you are saying at consultation, start engaging with people who genuinely seek dialogue. Don't end up like Nick Clegg.

With best wishes,
Yours sincerely,

Richard Grayson
Professor of Twentieth Century History
r.grayson@gold.ac.uk

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Dear Frances, Helen, Carol,

I am writing to express concern about forthcoming staff workshops advertised through the Wellbeing Service on 'Thriving Through Change' and 'Building Resilience to Workplace Stress'.

The workshops are stated as being provided 'given that some colleagues are feeling unsettled due to change at Goldsmiths' (communication from 27 Feb), yet the notion that colleagues are unsettled by 'change' *per se* is, I believe, misleading.

The first workshop - 'Thriving Through Change' – is described as helping 'to develop your personal and professional resilience, and help facilitate the development of resilience in others'. With regards to the second workshop - 'Building resilience to workplace stress' - participation will apparently 'enhance awareness of when and how you and your colleagues might be affected by work place stress'.

As a Sociologist specialising in research on the UK's HE sector, I am disheartened to see the rhetoric of 'resilience' being put to work in this context given that some staff now find their current roles at risk. In my own British Academy-funded research, I explored the experiences of casualised academic staff and found that the burden of anxiety precipitated by precarious working conditions was routinely 'individualised' in universities (see Loveday, 2018) – that is, staff are incited by employers to take personal responsibility for their own anxieties even though stress is exacerbated by wider structural and working conditions. The uncertainty inherent in fixed-term work is a significant stressor, but this also exists in combination with other well-documented pressures, such as high workloads, institutional inequalities, and the hostile environment.

Writing specifically on the delivery of wellbeing workshops for staff in universities, Rosalind Gill and Naire Donaghue (2016, p. 97) have argued that, 'These interventions systematically reframe academics' experiences as problems of a psychological nature – a deficit in resilience quotient—rather than structural consequences of a system placing intolerable demands upon its staff.' Presenting the origins of stress amongst Goldsmiths staff as a kind of mystery in need of exploring in a workshop seems to neatly sidestep detailed discussion of the ramifications of the Evolving Goldsmiths plans; similarly, 'Thriving through change' becomes a rather glib way of shifting the focus from our working conditions on to the individual employee who fails to cope with change – the type of depoliticisation so eloquently described by Mark Fisher (2012) in his analysis of the 'privatisation of stress'.

Perhaps the most unsettling aspect for Goldsmiths' staff is to feel as if the concerns that we have voiced in the past few weeks are not only being ignored, but that these

are now being framed as making us needlessly 'unsettled' – sowing the seeds of doubt, if you will. By now several collective letters have been authored and signed by staff from across the College in opposition to the plans set out in Evolving Goldsmiths, particularly with regards to lack of meaningful consultation, but also to proposed changes in line management for HoDs, DBMs and SAs, and loss of staff.

Colleagues from across Goldsmiths have clearly presented to members of SMT the concrete reasons for their opposition to the Evolving Goldsmiths plans, and we have asked that these be taken seriously; as has already been noted in communications to SMT, staff are not opposed to 'change' in itself, but to the specific types of changes that have been proposed without meaningful consultation. Staff would be best supported through engagement in constructive collaboration, not by dismissing concerns as resistance to 'change' and providing workshops on 'building resilience'. Finally, given SMT's concern for the College's financial situation, I am also puzzled as to why an external consultant is being paid to deliver the advertised Thriving Through Change workshop in March (and apparently further workshops in May and June).

Kind regards,

Vik

Dr. Vik Loveday
Senior Lecturer and Director of Undergraduate Programmes
Department of Sociology

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Tue 07/04/2020 09:15

Dear Frances Corner,

Your letter seems to have overlooked the death of a much loved member of staff, who died ten days ago from the Covid-19 virus which is causing so much grief. I really was expecting your email to acknowledge this, and to be more compassionate towards staff who are losing their colleagues and loved ones, who are home schooling, and struggling to protect their families, and stay well.

I appreciate the economic difficulties and so I quickly read on through your letter, searching for the statement that the restructure would be postponed indefinitely, and the energy and resources diverted to support our staff and students. Yet there was only a simmering panic about the financial future of the college, whilst trying to force through the restructure when staff and students are in lockdown. I am flabbergasted by these contradictions, and your lack of serious engagement with the professors group.

You described my feelings very accurately when you wrote "*I was perplexed, disappointed and deeply frustrated to receive this threat at this moment of national crisis.*" This is exactly how most people will feel when reading your email about still pushing on with the restructure. So I am not surprised that the professors group is proposing a vote of no confidence.

I would like to draw your attention to the London Trauma Specialists' recent presentation explaining the impact of the Coronavirus on people's lives, and ask you to consider your duty of care. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qzHwMuuw2s0>
The only one good thing about the Coronavirus is that it has finally made the marketisation you are still trying to practice politically untenable and deeply unfashionable.

Last night the bravado of Boris Johnson's denial of the seriousness of the virus has sadly led him to intensive care. Just a few weeks ago he boasted about shaking hands with people infected with the virus when the Chief Medical Officer was trying to make an important press statement about washing hands, not shaking them. If only Johnson had been humble enough to listen to his colleagues earlier.

As the UK Government is being forced to make daily U-turns in its ideology and practices, your management team could follow suit and reduce the constant bombardment of anxiety and stress through trying to restructure at the most inappropriate time, and by being humble enough to properly listen to the professors group, your staff and the union.

We need you to take the honorable U-turn in favour of care and support.

Best wishes,

Dr Ele Carpenter
Art Department

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SMT

I have signed the collective response of the Goldsmiths community to the Warden's email letter of 6 April written in response to the meeting with representatives of the Proforum.

My reasons are as follows. The policies you are pursuing in Evolving Goldsmiths, however much dressed up as rational and salvationist are, frankly, the tired response of 'new' managerialism in education everywhere . The strategy you are following is the strategy of education change everywhere and across all sectors of education in

the UK - schooling, F.E. and now H.E. The characteristic elements are cosmetic restructure; budget close down; the de-professionalization of academic staff perceived to be out of touch and obstructionist; and a huge growing of an administration claiming to be student centred and 'modern', but actually designed to serve the social logics of a political bureaucracy.

There is nothing 'innovative' about Evolving Goldsmiths. It amounts to little more than a very familiar routine. This is my complaint and grievance. You haven't thought enough or been brave enough in your strategic thinking.

I have no doubt that you would claim to be working 'for Goldsmiths'. But these policies do not speak to public service or to the values of the academy. Nor are they innocent. Elsewhere they have indeed brought a revolution in education, one which claims to raise standards but in fact lowers them; one which offers students choice but only at the price of massively increased personal risk parading as 'choice'; one which proclaims itself devoted to equality and yet which underwrites growing inequality in our society.

What you claim to be 'doing for' Goldsmiths is quite simply not good enough. That's why 'Evolving Goldsmiths' is producing so much dissent. It's also why I'm offering my support to Proforum.

Len Platt

Len Platt
Professor of Modern Literatures
Department of Educational Studies

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Professor Francis Corner OBE
Warden
Goldsmiths, University of London

8 April 2020

Dear Professor Corner,

I write to you as a Goldsmiths alumnus (1975-78) having been made aware of proposed large-scale plans for the future of the institution as laid out in the document *Evolving Goldsmiths*. I also write as someone with a career of just over 50 years which has included close involvement with a number of Higher Education institutions. I have been variously artist in residence, visiting teacher, lecturer, senior lecturer and head of a large department. During this time, I have been heavily involved in various

challenging situations and extreme crises including the closing of a department (one of a number simultaneously in that university) and wish to share some of my thinking and views that have evolved over time as a result of these varied experiences.

Firstly, I should say that I have no direct 'inside' knowledge of Goldsmiths' workings, either academically or administratively. I write as a sympathetic outsider, who long ago enjoyed being a part-time student who was left with a warmth and admiration for the institution.

I have read the nine-page *EG – Overview* and various internal responses to it. It is an impressive document with a view for 10 years hence. However, it is clear that this has been drawn up by administrative staff without the essential consultation and discussion with a wide range of agencies including academic staff, student bodies and unions. It immediately looks like the kind of imposition from on high that I have experienced in another leading HE institution. Sadly, the result of this approach is always to destroy academic morale, reduce the number of academics and never explain the 'how' in a plan. The points that always catch the eye are: new senior management appointments; voluntary severance schemes and the encouragement of staff to consider the possibility of reducing their contract. I have seen all these before presented as a *fait accompli* with no consultation.

I will not go into a detailed personal analysis of the programme. That is for others. However, I note that there has been an impressively forensic analysis of the purported financial situation, which throws up many concerns. I do hope that this is studied extremely carefully.

Such a major set of aspirations and proposals as set out in *EG* must surely have been established through extensive open discussions with representatives of all concerned. It appears not to have been the case. The impression then is that senior management knows much better than any academic staff what should be done/changed/developed and does not respect or trust them. This is deep down a very defensive attitude. The way any organisation moves forward successfully is by working as equal partners in a genuine team effort. The academics are actually the ones who *really* know about students, for instance, yet the document implies that senior management are the ones with intimate knowledge of current or future student wishes, concerns and aspirations. Where is the evidence for this? Indeed, there seems to be no evidential support for any of the programme. Yet there is a fairly dogmatic view of what things will be like in 10 years' time. This project seems rushed, with some actions being initiated immediately.

It is easy to comment from outside, but as I said above, I have been in very similar situations with, and I am sorry to use this term, autocratic actions that demean the very people who make the institution a success and whose work is frequently renowned internationally. Teamwork is essential for good management. This includes transparency (used several times in the document) at all times, sharing, *listening* and

adapting management views to shape the future in which all have a shared stake: management; academics, students and one must not forget the vital support staff. I would urge those involved in developing this programme to draw in representatives of all who will be affected so that it can be a strong and fully-supported initiative that will see Goldsmiths move through these very troubling times and emerge in ten years or whenever as a deservedly successful institution in which all staff can be proud, and that others could see as a model of excellent management practices.

Yours sincerely,

cc

Elisabeth Hill
David Oswell
Mark D’Inverno
Dinah Caine

Ian Mitchell
Clarinetist, Director of Gemini

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London, 9. April 2020

Dear Frances Corner, dear SMT,

Thank you for your email on “Goldsmiths collective response to COVID-19”. I share your worries about the lack of “collective foundations” for a future of Goldsmiths. But I fear that you misread Goldsmiths as an organisation. You write as if staff members had no access to other sources of communication other than those which you control. It is true that you control the most important communication channel Goldmine. This is itself problematic at a time of deep crisis, when it would be important that multiple communication channels remain at the disposal of various people. But despite repeated demands, you have refused to open up Evolving Goldsmiths into a more inclusive format to build such shared foundations. But this is beside the point here. The fact is that you write your email by making claims that omit important facts. While you may feel that this is your right to omit these facts, and surely it is your right, you seem to misunderstand how much this further damages trust in what you do and say.

Literally everyone on college knows that the “five professors” are not just five professors, but the spokespeople for the majority of all professors and incidentally, most probably the majority of all staff members. Claiming that these five professors ambushed you with a no confidence vote after you tried to listen, similarly omits important facts. Everyone on college knows that the professors’ forum sent you a list

of demands several days before and said that unless you agree to these demands they would begin a vote of no confidence on that date and that you did not agree to these demands at that meeting. Sure, it is entirely in your right to ignore these demands and omit this important fact from your own email. But a lot of people work in local Coalmines, and hear news from Coalmine workers, not only in distant Goldmines. So what exactly did you hope to achieve by omitting these facts, and what do you think you did actually achieve?

You are absolutely right that we are in a deep crisis. But not so long ago, you claimed that critics of Evolving Goldsmiths were confused when they claimed that EG was a program of cuts on the back of staff. Not at all, you said, EG means to grow out of the crisis and EG is a programme of investments.

How quickly things change. But still you do not bring it over you to say that you will abandon EG, even though the COVID crisis has disrupted all your plans, whatever their merits were some three months ago. Thus we are in a crisis, but a very different one that stood at the beginning of your plans, and we need to find a way out of it, and finding a way out of it is not via Evolving Goldsmiths as it was originally conceived, whatever its merits.

But even under these dramatic circumstances instead of choosing the sensible way out, and declaring it dead, you insist in continuing it, while at the same time accusing those who object to it, of being divisive. Almost certainly a majority of staff member opposes EG. EG, and the way how it was introduced, is divisive, not these staff members. EG was initiated by SMT, not by five professors.

Collectively, we need to work our way out of this, as you rightly assert. But how should we collectively find a way out of it, if you seem to be intent on destroying trust that staff have ever put in you and SMT, if you accuse people of divisiveness, who only want the best for the College, even if it is something else than what you want? Your logic is a logic of the state of exception: We live in unprecedented times, and therefore staff need to follow and do what the Warden and SMT say: "We need to lead Goldsmiths through it and not be driven by it."

But what if your decisions turn out to be wrong? What if they do not have the support of the community? And given the email that omits important facts, why should people trust you to take the right decisions for them? John Wadsworth has written a thoughtful and helpful letter to you, pointing out how you could earn back the trust of staff members. As far as I am aware, but feel free to correct me on that point, you have not answered him, nor have you demonstrated in action what he suggests to do.

I am not sure whether you realize how every single staff member has worked like a hero to deal with the COVID crisis. As far as I can judge, staff members were incredibly fast, flexible and helpful to deal with enormous workload demands and uncertainty, while at the same time doing superhuman tasks of home-schooling, and caring for friends and relatives.

There were emails going back and fro between scholars of various departments, HoDs, DBMs, various admin staff about a myriad of issues, and these were usually resolved at speed. If you ever needed proof that staff members are not opposed to change, you have it here. Yet you accuse Goldsmiths staff members of being opposed to change, when the only thing they oppose is top-down reforms that add costs. In the back of our minds, there was the obvious question: How would a stronger school structure with stronger Deans have helped?

The only possible answer I ever heard was this: it would have made things worse. All of this happened in a vacuum of direction from SMT. There were millions of decisions taken at ground level, quickly, in the best interests of students and other staff members, far faster than there were any answers from SMT. This is not a complaint, it is an observation, and it is entirely normal in situations like these. SMT obviously needs time, and new regulations are complex to set-up, further compounded by a lack of answers from regulators.

But all of this should give you pause to think a little bit more whether this really helps your claim that staff need to follow your plan to add further levels of bureaucracy and removing decision making powers from HoDs and DBMs.

Worryingly, in your letter you also imply that there are many staff members who actually support EG, but do not dare to speak out. Given that you do not provide any empirical substance to the claim, I find it hard to believe. Everything we know about the social psychology of loyalty, voice and exit, to use Albert O. Hirschman's well-known terminology, points to the fact that "voice", as opposition to power, needs courage. In fact, I know of a rather large number of people who oppose EG, but do not dare to sign letters of protest, because they fear about their jobs. It is far more likely, contrary to your claim, that there are many more staff members who oppose EG than those 600 who have signed various letters.

To assume that there are many people who support EG but dare not speak out does not really make a lot of sense, when they obviously would have the protection of the Warden and SMT to do so, and most likely all communication channels at their disposal. Furthermore, it is damaging the intellectual atmosphere of Goldsmiths to imply that those people who oppose EG suppress others. Also, if you are so sure that there is a silent majority backing you, then you should welcome an anonymous vote of no confidence and further democratization of college, which would surely vindicate your plans!

Your claim that "we need to build on the foundations we've laid together" in the light of these words is hard to follow. It is true, many people have been laying foundations together, and these are expressed in a document called "Alternative Goldsmiths". It would be kind if you acknowledged this collective foundation laying and if you, SMT and the council demonstrated some curiosity about what it might mean for our shared future, rather than ignore it. I would sincerely hope that in the future you and SMT at

least try to face the fact that a collective new foundation building is already happening, and act in the interests of all of Goldsmiths, rather than accusing critics of being divisive. EG has already done considerable damage to Goldsmiths, both internally and externally. Now that it is undone by COVID and that we are in a state of unprecedented crisis, you could at least try to work and get the trust of College back, rather than destroy it further.

I am looking forward to read your answer.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Guggenheim

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20/03/2020

The Warden,
Goldsmiths College

Evolving Goldsmiths

Dear Frances Corner,

I am writing to share some of the concerns I have regarding Evolving Goldsmiths and how it is being handled and also to share some of my experiences with you in what I hope will seen as a helpful and collegiate way.

As far as I can see, everyone at Goldsmiths accepts that there is a budgetary problem that needs to be solved, nobody is in denial over that or the need to recruit more students. Any concerns that have been expressed relate to the manner in which we have arrived at a situation where "Evolving Goldsmiths" is the only option on the table. Goldsmiths staff are not averse to change or afraid of it but they do need to be convinced that it is being done for the right reasons. In this instance the budget situation seems as if it is being used as the driver for sweeping changes without any evidence that there will be any benefits. In some respects this parallels the UK Government using coronavirus as a rationale for adopting sweeping, draconian powers with no guarantee that they will be relinquished in the future.

If you want to get people on side you need to listen to them and show that you are listening to them. That does not mean holding one sided consultations. I am too familiar with DfE consultations where the results are ignored but the 'consulted' box can be ticked. I have attended one of your open meetings and spoken to staff at all

levels who were also present and the general consensus seems to be that we were talked at, patronised and definitely not heard. If you want people to come on side then you need a wholly different approach. I have experience of working with leaders of Children's Centres, complex organisations involving many different agencies working together and the most effective leadership I have encountered is derived from an andragogical (feminist) approach. Leaders who adopted this model were characterised by a number of qualities:

1. they had a clear vision that they were able to share with all stakeholders (including people with different professional heritages) and by listening, responding and adapting achieved high levels of buy in;
2. they empowered people, recognised their strengths and developed them, creating a culture where experimenting was accepted with no blame being apportioned if things didn't work out as planned;
3. they were open to admitting when they had got things wrong;
4. they were non-hierarchical, recognising that everyone had their part to play regardless of gender, ethnicity or education;
5. they were prepared to listen to all points of view, not just the ones they liked or agreed with.

Without a willingness to listen to genuine concerns, people feel talked at and some of the changes proposed in Evolving Goldsmiths appear as dogma rather than based on evidence.

As far as I can see, centralising services falls into this category. There is no evidence presented to us that it will improve either the student or staff experience. It may, but it is a big risk to take without any hard evidence. One of the features of Goldsmiths is that staff here care deeply about the institution and the students we work with. On a daily basis I deal with students who are facing challenges in their personal and University lives, they generally appreciate a familiar face who actually cares about them. No centralised service accessed via a web page can replicate that.

Developing the schools structure also seems to be derived from dogma. As far as I am aware they have not delivered any benefits other than to the people who have derived status through their creation. You must know by now that Heads of Departments and Departmental Business Managers remain unconvinced by the supposed benefits of this change.

As a former member of College Council, I am particularly shocked by reports that Academic Board did not approve "Evolving Goldsmiths" before it was presented to Council. The Statutes clearly require Academic Board to approve any matter with academic implications. This raises rather more serious questions of good governance and accountability.

As a final note I would like to share with you the advice I received from an experienced Headteacher just before I was due to take on the same role. She told me, "there will be things that need changing and changes you want to make. Don't become a new broom but take time to understand the culture of the institution, spend your time building relationships and trust. Listen to people, show that you value them and then when you need to make changes they will support you." She was right.

Kind regards,

John Wadsworth - Senior Lecturer (Educational Studies)

cc. Dinah Caine - Chair of Council
Marian Carty - President, Goldsmiths UCU

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Subject: Goldsmiths' collective response to Covid-19

Dear Frances Corner

I have just signed the collective response of the Goldsmiths' Community to your email sent yesterday.

It is a matter of great sadness that, having worked at Goldsmiths for a quarter of a Century, I find myself having to sign such a letter.

I have felt truly privileged to work at an institution where openness and protest are part and parcel of who we are but, having read your letter, I fear that you misunderstand our traditions and that your solutions to our problems will simply kill what makes us special. And if Goldsmiths is not special (even at times outrageous) it cannot win in this education marketplace.

We are now entering a period when we need to work together to pull a rabbit out of the hat of the Covid epidemic. My colleagues are working desperately hard to support students. They are preparing new online courses at one week's notice, spending hours and hours talking to students, and reassuring them, and more hours providing feedback online because they cannot talk to them in person.

You have given them no encouragement and no thanks for the hours of over-time (many provided by part time lecturers). Indeed, unlike many other colleges, you are docking strike pay. Why would you expect support under these circumstances?

I have the greatest respect for those of my colleagues who have stepped forward to represent the Professors (almost all of whom have signed up to the Professors'

Forum). They have listened to the voices of caution, suggesting we take things slowly and negotiate, because they were so sure you would understand that dialogue is more important than confrontation.

To my knowledge there is no silent majority for your plans. If people are cautious it is because they don't want to cause trouble at such a critical time, if they are silent it is because they are afraid. Fear may be a useful discipline in an army. We are not an army.

I very much hope that it is not too late to change the course of this conversation. You have an extraordinary body of people working for you. They are stepping up because they care about the students. I hope you will step up too.

Yours Sincerely

[Name and Address Withheld]

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Dear Frances, David, Mark, and Dinah,

As a member of Goldsmiths teaching staff and Director of the Centre for Research Architecture, I am writing to let you know that I too have signed the collective response of the Goldsmiths community to the Warden's email letter of 6 April. I have also signed the collective staff letters that have circulated previously.

I fully support the positions articulated within and share in the worry that so many of the views of your dedicated staff and our wonderful students have largely fallen on deaf ears especially at a time when lives are at stake. And sadly one of our colleagues has already died from Covid-19. I was dismayed not to see any mention of his passing nor indeed a sincere moment of pause and reflection. Without missing a beat the email moved from expressing concern over the Covid crisis to the university's financial woes as if they were of the same order of urgency.

My singular priority has been and continues to be the health and well-being of our students and the staff who have worked tirelessly to help mitigate their fears and deliver a semblance of their scholarly programme online - not easy when delivering practice-based work as we do.

Without genuine compassion and empathy we are already finished as a university.

Respectfully, Susan

Dr. Susan Schuppli

Reader & Director
Centre for Research Architecture

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Dear Frances and SMT,

I'm writing to confirm my signing of the collective statement that represents my views in response to your email letter dated Monday 6 April 2020.

Division will not help us at this time, constructive collaboration will. I urge that yourself and SMT listen to the loud and significant voice of the many feeling as I do, and seek a more effective way forward for Goldsmiths that involves those that make it happen.

Take care and be safe

John Backwell

John Backwell
PhD Supervisor
Associate Lecturer Design Education

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Subject: Evolving Goldsmiths

Dear Professor Corner,

In response to your open letter to Goldsmiths' staff on 7 April I must begin by registering both my astonishment and anger that you have chosen to misrepresent the terms of the formal meeting by five professors with you on behalf of more than sixty members of the Professors Forum last Friday.

You must surely be aware of the serious concern expressed over the past months by a huge number of members of academic staff, administrative staff and students at the autocratic and arbitrary manner in which you, on behalf of the SMT have attempted to impose the 'Evolving Goldsmiths' strategy on this institution. Your implication that the view expressed by the representatives of the Professors Forum represents the divisive opinion of a divided group of academics simply will not square with the true situation of which you must be well aware.

The overwhelmingly negative responses to the proposal the SMT is attempting to foist upon us without proper consultation has been articulated on behalf of staff by Heads of Department, members of the Academic Board, the Professors Forum, representatives of GUCU and the Students Union. These groups had attempted to make their views known to you and to Goldsmiths Council a number of weeks before the university went into lockdown over the Covid-19 crisis, nevertheless It appears that you have opportunistically sought to exploit the health crisis in order to push the unpopular EG plan forward while simply ignoring the criticism and queries which a great many of us have tried to express on numerous occasions and in a number of fora.

A significant number of academic staff – by an informal count, the majority – believe that the plan is ill-conceived and short-sighted and that much greater involvement of academics and university support staff would contribute to reshaping the proposal into a plan that is both pragmatically effective in the short term and does not risk abandoning the core values on which Goldsmiths' uniqueness and, from a business perspective, its marketability as a brand is based.

My own view is that the Evolving Goldsmiths paper presents an analysis of the financial problems of the institution which is both inaccurate and misguided. Before agreeing to any potential savings, we require the SMT to provide a satisfactory account of the miscalculations that led to this deficit in the first place. We will then be in a position to assist in securing a bright future for Goldsmiths in both financial and academic terms.

I have been a member of the T&P Department since 1990 and in that time have had the privilege of working fairly closely with four Wardens. In these years I have witnessed Goldsmiths weather as many as five financial crises. Time inevitably necessitates change, but in the current situation change must be wisely managed to harness the commitment of both staff and students to what has always been a collective enterprise.

All good wishes,

Robert Gordon

*Professor of Theatre,
Director, Pinter Centre for Performance and Creative Writing,
Department of Theatre and Performance,
Goldsmiths, University of London*

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Subject: Why I have signed the collective response of the Goldsmiths community to your email letter to staff of 6 April

Dear Frances Corner, SMT, Dinah Caine,

I have signed the collective response of the Goldsmiths community to your email to staff of 6 April and would like to add my personal views.

I was shocked by the distance that this letter displayed, between yourself and SMT towards the Goldsmiths community consisting of teaching, administrative and professional staff and students. Sadly I was not surprised anymore as this comes after a series of grave disappointments with GS management and many signs that there is a lack of understanding of what happens 'on the ground' and what makes Goldsmiths unique.

The attempt of your letter to continue to create divisions amongst staff by singling out five professors suggested to me that you must be entirely unaware of the high level of communication between different constituencies at Goldsmiths and the widely shared lack of trust in the current processes of your management, in your Evolving Goldsmiths proposal and your ability to really work with us collectively to steer Goldsmiths through this unique time. We are all very aware of the Professors Forum, that it consists of at least 116 professors and that this constituency, one of several, has been in close contact with the rest of the college throughout this period. So I was very shocked to read your mail. I felt somebody was actively trying to deceive me.

I was equally shocked by your use of terminologies which are entirely misused and make a mockery of what many of us teach and research. Many of us are thoroughly engaging with historic moments of radical change, with collective processes of communities seeking justice, with inventions of forms of living due to being confronted with extreme crises. I learn a lot from artists and activists facing daily challenges imposed through a supremacist political system in the context of Kashmir, for example. Hence, to read about the need to 'be radical' when you are proposing a reduction of democratic governing processes at GS, when your restructure is likely to impact those members of teaching staff that struggle to pay their rent every month, when this anxiety was enhanced by the continuation of pay deductions due to the strike even during Covid 19, when the Evolving Goldsmiths plan did in no way engage with questions of equality for BAME and female members of staff - all of these plans and acts render the terms 'radical', 'social justice', 'collective' and 'community', totally hollow. This again suggested to me that there is very little understanding at management level of the kind of work we do and how we think and act together with our students about possible, viable and just alternatives. The Alternative Goldsmiths plan is one very good example of how this could look at GS.

I was also disappointed by the lack of acknowledgment of the incredible hard work that all of us are putting into maintaining the running of the college as well as the

sanity and wellbeing of our students. Everyone's commitment right now goes far beyond doing a job. Everyone is doing their best to support each other to get through this unprecedented crisis. It is very unfortunate that your EG plan includes destroying the very departmental structure that is exactly what keeps us going right now. Unfortunately your message today (8 April) has not managed to change my view after your divisive email before, even though I am glad that the hard work of our union has led to some concessions on your part.

I really hoped for an understanding of this situation, for signs of support and for a recognition that Evolving Goldsmiths must immediately be stopped and that any alternatives must be thought through as a collective, through meaningful consultations with all constituencies, each of them so vital for the running of the college, that I would happily contribute to. I would also have appreciated an acknowledgment of the crisis we are in and a sign of solidarity through a reduction in Senior Management pay.

In solidarity with everyone who has and will sign the collective letter, with the Professors Forum and with GUCU, and with a request that you and your team listen to what is undoubtedly the majority position at Goldsmiths.

Thank you for your time in reading this email.

Yours sincerely,

Nicole Wolf

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Subject: Goldsmiths Collective Response

Dear Frances Corner, Dinah Caine and the SMT,

I have signed the collective letter in response to your email of Monday 6th April.

Thank you for your email. I was surprised, however, that – while evoking the language of community and togetherness – your email-letter did not recognise the hard work and long hours that we have been doing to support students, to take teaching on-line very quickly whilst juggling changed and uncertain circumstances in our private and professional lives. In the name of collectivity and community, I expected to receive a letter of thanks from you to the community of Goldsmiths recognising the work we have done now and over many years to build this “community”. And as a sign of this “thanks” – from you, the leader of the community that you evoke – I expected to read that you and the SMT had agreed to cancel the strike deductions in line with the position taken by the senior management at

universities such as Kings College, London as a sign of respect for the long additional additional hours and hard work we are doing teaching, offering support (both academic and pastoral) and generally caring for our community.

I am deeply sad not to have received this expected letter from you, speaking of “community” and coming together in this way, and thus showing yourself to be a strong, compassionate and responsive leader. What a missed opportunity. In contrast, I have been incredibly inspired by the work of the Professors Forum, and whatever happens next I will always remember the way in which 116 professors have stood together on behalf of other more junior and precarious staff to question and seek to resolve this flawed strategy of EG. I thank them for undertaking this work.

Thank you for your hard work in envisaging a plan to shore up the future of Goldsmiths, I recognise that this is important work that needs to be done. However, I cannot understand the logic of not pausing EG for further consideration especially as so many businesses and other organisations are having to pause and reflect on their business models at this point in time (due to Covid-19). Given that EG may need to “evolve” differently in light of the ramifications of Covid-19, it would be sensitive and responsible to pause and revise these plans and to allow all voices to be heard because we do indeed need to come together to make positive change.

I originally came to the UK 20 years ago to study at Goldsmiths and I was extremely proud to become a staff member here twelve years later after having held positions at Chelsea College of Art and Design, University of Essex and University of Kent. I returned to academia after a number of years managing arts organisations, so this is a choice I have invested in and care for outside of the limited financial returns but because I believe deeply in the work of research and of teaching in a supportive and expansive enquiry-driven manner. This is I believe the strength of Goldsmiths’ “offer” – the people who drive dynamic new research, and support and encourage our students through expansive and non-normative terrains of thought and practice; these people are us, academics – please value us, we deserve your respect and indeed thanks for having “squared up” to the challenges of building and caring for our “community” over many years and especially now in the face of such uncertainty.

Yours sincerely,

Bridget Crone

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Subject: Be Kind and Open

Dear Francis, Elisabeth, David, Mark and Dinah,

I hope this message finds you well in these challenging times.

I felt compelled to write you with regards to the Evolving Goldsmiths plans you are pushing through.

This isn't the time for heavy-handed reforms based on contested numbers and thinking from yesterday. I believe we can reinvent Goldsmiths together, which is why I added my name to the long list of colleagues before me in the collective statement. I hope you'll be open enough to listen.

I was teaching at the Royal College of Art in 2010 when Thompson pushed through similar reforms and I witnessed closely the devastating effect it had on student experiences. I stopped teaching soon after.

No doubt there are systemic pressures outside the college's control, not in the least caused by successive conservative governments. But we should challenge those, now more than ever. And we can only do so collectively.

Best wishes,

[Name Withheld]

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Subject: Re: Response to Warden's 6 April email letter

Dear Frances

I have signed the collective response of the Goldsmiths community to your email letter of 6 April. When reading your email, I found myself initially agreeing that the one sent to you by the Professors' Forum didn't seem the right approach, until I saw a copy of it and realised that you had misrepresented the contents. Even as a part-time associate lecturer, with my focus largely elsewhere from Goldsmiths, I resent being misled in this way, and so can only imagine how others feel about it, especially as this is such a serious matter.

Best wishes,

Cathy Rosario
TaP

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Subject: message to the Warden and SMT

Dear Frances

I just signed a joint letter in response to your email on Monday, where you called on the Goldsmiths community to stand together at this time of crisis while accusing a group of colleagues for failing to do so.

Since the announcement of Evolving Goldsmiths, I have signed every single such letter. It seems I have been offered no other voice than to put my name down on various google documents to comment on a programme of action that I believe is going to be very detrimental to college and indeed destroy the very 'brand' that renders it unique.

Labelling the community's protests against EG as resistance to change is misleading. We do all want the same thing: a university that not only sustains itself but thrives financially, pedagogically, as a place of learning, creativity and research, and as a community. I am sure you have read the Gold paper. I attach it here just in case. This document also sets out a programme of change, reached through a truly collaborative effort, to render Goldsmiths precisely the kind of place the students of the 21st Century would wish to join. If we need change, and of course we do, let's work out together what and how we need to change.

I have been working here since 2007. I even served as acting head of department for a very short period of time. I am not the stereotype of an academic who is inconvenienced by the need for change or oblivious to financial constraints. I am a real person who has unique insight into what happens here. Consultation is not a tick-box exercise (and the students we wish to recruit are very aware of this too). I hope you choose to meet me and learn from me, and others like me, all members of this brilliant community who are asking you to pause this programme of action and listen. Stand together with us.

Many thanks for reading this email.

Best wishes

Göze

Dr. Göze Saner
Senior Lecturer
Chair of Exams
Department of Theatre and Performance
Goldsmiths, University of London

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Subject: Warden's email letter of 6 April

Dear Frances Corner, members of SMT (and Chair of Council),

I would like to convey my disappointment in your response to the collective efforts by staff to participate in the future advancement of Goldsmiths. Many of us have worked hard to build Goldsmiths and establish its world-wide reputation. This has become increasingly harder due to many factors but the difficulties we face do not arise from a lack of ability by the staff to provide high quality teaching and research.

As a member of the Professors Forum, I was shocked and dismayed at how you have chosen to misrepresent our efforts as well as falsely claim that the group represents a small minority. It seems that you may not have grasped the truly very special commitment there is to see the institution flourish as a leading beacon in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Indeed, I do not understand your outright hostility to our genuine efforts to advance Goldsmiths. It is so different to the collegiality experienced before your arrival.

We need you to unite rather than create divisions as your plan for Evolving Goldsmiths has done between senior management and staff. The Professors Forum has presented you with an opportunity that surely any manager would appreciate – a will to move forward, to adapt and create in a truly collective manner that shares the responsibility for the future of higher education.

We do not know what will come 'after' COVID-19 for Higher Education in the United Kingdom, but this is surely a time to work toward a future different to the present. A future that involves high quality learning, adequate income support and a radical shift away from austerity measures that have put Goldsmiths in jeopardy. Indeed, it is not only Goldsmiths that is at risk from these measures. It is a burden that other educational institutions are experiencing and that we are now seeing played out in the most horrifying way in the health sector due to a shockingly depleted NHS. To build such a future requires, as I appreciate you intend, addressing current difficulties. However, to do so requires a collective effort. It requires leadership that is willing to learn and adapt and does so with those it represents.

I have not had an opportunity to meet you in person. You have not visited my department to learn about what we do and how we do it. Perhaps you have visited others, I do not know. But I stress that each department and member of staff as well as our changing students are unique. Your advisors may feel they are best placed to advise you on our day-to-day teaching and the kinds of research we undertake. But they are not at the 'coal-face'. The opposition to what you have proposed for an Evolving Goldsmiths has arisen not only because of the manner in which it was presented but because it does not address what we, at the 'coal-face', know what works and what does not.

More than ever in the current crisis posed by COVID-19 as well as in relation to the College deficit, it is necessary to appreciate and support a collective effort by all. This brings me to the extremely worrying decision that you have made, to date, of docking pay for the strike. Perhaps you do not realise that this will make little difference to Goldsmiths coffers but an immense difference to individual staff, especially those who must support partners whose income has disappeared overnight due to the cuts in income with this crisis.

Having managed social services prior to becoming an academic and, while at Goldsmiths, having built a large international organisation of social scientists to respond to an earlier time in the HIV epidemic, I cannot stress enough the importance of working collegially. The true success of any worthy organisation depends on this.

In all sincerity, I ask you to please review your current approach to what we as a collective body of staff across the College and representative of the sentiments of many others are calling for. I urge you to accept our offer to contribute to a stronger, bolder and more successful Goldsmiths. Built not from managerialism that is at the forefront of Evolving Goldsmiths, but with an appreciation for the intellectual work that is our strength and supported by our professional staff in order to address the deficit.

Of key importance now and for the future, is leadership that we can put our trust in and value. We need leadership keen to create a future that, I truly hope you will agree, works toward sustaining and advancing what has made Goldsmiths special and, more so, for the challenges ahead. This requires joining with us, not misinterpreting and deriding our efforts.

Yours sincerely

Marsha Rosengarten
Professor of Sociology

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Subject: Fw: Response To The Warden's Email 6th April

I have signed the collective response of the Goldsmiths community to the Warden's email letter of 6 April.

I have no confidence in Evolving Goldsmiths as a plan for solving the problems that

Goldsmiths College is now facing or as an appropriate strategy that will take the College into the future. Therefore, I support the Alternative Goldsmiths Campaign.

Miles Thompson
Associate Lecturer In Theatre and Performance.

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Subject: collective response to EG and warden's email of 6 April

Dear all

I am writing to inform you that I have signed the collective statement in opposition to Evolving Goldsmiths, and in support of the more collaborative and transparent process of change that we need at this difficult moment.

Professor Tom Perchard

Director of Research
Department of Music

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Subject: Re: Goldsmiths' collective response to Covid-19

Dear Frances and members of SMT,

I have worked at Goldsmiths for 5 years and when I came to work here I was glad and proud to return 'home' to the place I had previously studied at for many years. I have been on parental leave and have recently returned to work.

I was dismayed by the tone and content of the email sent to all staff re: Covid-19 and have signed the collective response from the Goldsmiths community. I won't rehash the points of the collective letter here but the email from Frances felt divisive and failed to appreciate how hard staff are working at the moment. While on leave I have watched as emails and WhatsApp messages fly between my colleagues at all hours as they discuss ways to deliver the best possible online teaching to students. My colleagues/friends are spending hours on Skype supporting students as they navigate their studies through this global crisis. These efforts have been met with the chilliest of responses from the warden. In contrast, here is the letter sent out from the KCL vice-chancellor.

https://media.kcl.ac.uk/media/A+pre-Easter+message+from+the+Principal/1_obxtp6fv

I fully stand behind the senior colleagues who are not issuing threats but acting for the good of all staff and students at this difficult time.

I truly hope SMT listen to the Goldsmiths' community.

best wishes,

Emma

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Dear Frances

Please note that I have signed the collective response of the Goldsmiths community to your email yesterday.

In fact, I was surprised and shocked to read your email yesterday. I have found the tone in your email not to be collaborative and collegiate. You seem to want to discredit that Professors' Forum stating that "I met with five Professors who said they were *advocating on behalf of a self-organised group* of colleagues." It seems that when writing this email you were fully informed about the Forum.

I hope that you will recognise the need to engage with the whole workforce and community at Goldsmiths.

Kind regards

[Name Withheld]

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Subject: Support for Professors' Forum

Dear SMT,

I'm writing to let you know that I support the collective statement in response to the Warden's email letter (6 April 2020).

In particular, I am disappointed that there has been no concrete recognition of the good will generated by staff, particularly in the light of the Covid-19 crisis. I have witnessed extraordinary professionalism and acts of kindness from my colleagues in TaP over the past few weeks. We have received an overwhelmingly positive response from students, who are consistently appreciative that we are going 'above and beyond'.

I would ask you to reconsider some key decisions. This will go a long way to healing some of the rifts that have emerged recently. In particular, I would urge you to postpone the withholding of pay as a result of industrial action and to call a halt on Evolving Goldsmiths, instigating fresh thinking in full consultation with staff once the crisis is over.

I write this from the 'front line' in the spirit of constructive engagement, as a Senior Tutor who is spending a great deal of my time and energy at the moment supporting students in very tough personal circumstances. I experience my work as hugely purposeful and am grateful that I can be useful while locked down. At the same time, my work is requiring new levels of emotional reserves, without any additional meaningful support or supervision from College (albeit, I feel exceptionally well line-managed). As with many members of staff, I am dealing with additional personal stress as a result of the pandemic. Sadly, I perceive the actions of SMT show a lack of basic compassion or understanding; a feeling which I believe is shared by an overwhelming majority of staff.

I hope that this representation from an individual member of staff can have some impact on your future decisions.

Sincerely,

[Name Withheld]

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Subject: Collective Goldsmiths community response

To Frances Corner, Elisabeth Hill, David Oswell, Mark d'Inverno and Dinah Caine

Please note that I have signed the collective response of the Goldsmiths community to the Warden's email letter of 6 April and that I support it wholeheartedly.

Sincerely
Mariam Motamedi-Fraser

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Subject: Doubts about 'Evolving Goldsmiths'

Date: 16 March 2020 at 20:33:52 GMT

Professor Frances Corner
Warden, Goldsmiths U. of London

My name is Manuel Tironi, associate professor at the Dept of Sociology at Universidad Católica de Chile. I spent 2013-14 as a visiting researcher at Goldsmiths' CISP (funded by the Chilean National Agency for Science and Technology Development). Without exaggerating, it was the most provoking, challenging, inspiring year in my academic career I have ever had. My research agenda was shaped in so many and flourishing ways spending time with colleagues from CISP, Sociology, Design, and Anthropology—just by being immersed in the effervescent atmosphere at Golds. In times of academic accelerationism in which thought and knowledge have become symbiotic with the interests of capital, Goldsmiths has always stood—it stood for me—as a unique intellectual space where knowledge could still mean something for itself—it could still retain its independence. I'm convinced that it is due to this sovereignty that Golds is, today, a key research reference and inspiration in many quarters of the social sciences.

I have revised the 'Evolving Goldsmiths' plan, as I have talked with colleagues about the impacts of such changes. And I have come to the conclusion that the plan could severely damage Golds' unique position and mission. I'm afraid that by centralising financial structures, decisions about "good research" would be taken by funding or 'strategic' criteria, rather than by knowledge or scientific goals. I'm aware of the difficulties, in the UK, Chile, and elsewhere, of financing research and the need for attracting resources, particularly for an institution that is not engaged in 'profitable' knowledge (engineering, biotech, natural and geo sciences, medicine, etc.). But I profoundly doubt that the answer is in dissolving precisely what makes Golds a bright exception in the research ecosystem: its independence.

I take the liberty of writing you this email only because I am deeply grateful for what Goldsmiths has meant in my academic career, and excited about what it can mean in the future for other researchers around the globe.

With warm regards,

Manuel

Manuel Tironi
Profesor Asociado
Instituto de Sociología

P. Universidad Católica de Chile

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Subject: Goldsmiths' research and learning reputation at stake

Dear Francis Corner.

I am a professor at the University of New South Wales, Sydney Australia with an international reputation in media studies, cultural theory and contemporary art (research profile: <https://research.unsw.edu.au/people/professor-anna-marie-munster>)

I have had a long and immensely productive association with Goldsmiths including giving workshops and guest lectures to staff across media, cultural studies and sociology since 2007. This has been due to the high quality of innovative thinking by staff in Sociology, Media and Communications and the Centre for Social Invention. Goldsmiths' academic staff –from professors through to lecturers – in these disciplines and centres especially are world renowned for being at the cutting edge of global intellectual life.

I have recently found out about your plans to 'Evolve Goldsmiths'. Having been involved myself in a brutal period of change at my own University in which centralisation and job cuts have been the focus, I can emphatically state that your strategies will have a similar detrimental effect on the capacity to undertake social science, humanities and creative arts oriented research. Centralisation in effect means that academic staff end up doing at least 40% additional administration –of research grants, research teams and so forth in their working life. Job losses do not only put great thinkers and doers out of work but have a terrible effect on the morale of remaining staff members. Your plans will likely also have a similar detrimental effect on Goldsmiths' academics.

I am fully aware of the the financial situation that universities find themselves in the twenty first century, as I sit on governance boards at my own institution. However, *academic* staff are highly likely to have insight and come up with innovative ideas for targeting new student cohorts and for collaborating and pooling resources among staff. I consequently urge you to engage in a productive consultative approach with your own staff to assist the university as a united body to find a way forward in current times,

Regards

Professor Anna Munster

Prof. Anna Munster
UNSW Art and Design
University of New South Wales

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Subject: Collective Response to the Warden's Message of 6 April

Dear Professor Corner and members of SMT,

I have signed the collective response of the Goldsmiths community, dated 7 April 2020, to your e-mail letter of 6 April, and am in full support of the four demands this makes.

Yours,

Keith Potter

Professor of Music
Department of Music

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Dear Warden, Members of Council and Senior Management Team,

I am writing to notify you that I have added my signature to the hundreds of others from colleagues across College to the statement in support of the Professors Forum and expressing our unhappiness at the tone and content of your email of 6 April 2020. It is deeply disturbing that at a time like this we are being presented with such divisive, unhelpful and aggressive leadership. It is counterproductive and I sincerely hope you will reconsider your approach moving forward.

Yours truly,
Kiran Grewal

Dr Kiran Grewal
Reader, Department of Sociology

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Dear Frances Corner, SMT,

I have signed the collective response of the Goldsmiths community to the Warden's email letter of 6 April to protest the divisive tone and content of your letter, which has shocked me profoundly.

I am currently still a lecturer in the Department of Politics and International Relations. And while I am not a full professor, I feel fully represented by the Professors' Forum in rejecting your flawed idea of Evolving Goldsmiths, demanding for the democratisation of your top-down decision-making, and protesting your cruel decision to impose unnecessary suffering on your staff by pressing ahead with strike deduction during the COVID-19 crisis.

I write that I am *currently still* a lecturer because I will be leaving Goldsmiths at the end of this academic year. I resigned from my permanent position with a heavy heart. I only joined the College in September 2018. I was initially very enthusiastic about the Goldsmiths, not least because of its critical profile. My enthusiasm has waned since you have started to impose authoritarianism and austerity on the College.

During my brief time as an early career researcher at Goldsmiths, I secured more than £70,000 in external research funding for my Department. I published a research monograph with Cornell University Press and other research outputs in world-leading journals of my field. I have also translated my work into impact through knowledge transfer activities such as training workshops with a range of actors from United Nations diplomats to civil society members in Southeast Asia. Besides this, I have been teaching undergraduate and graduate students, have supervised a PhD student, and demonstrated leadership by convening two of the Department's largest study programmes.

I would have really liked to stay at Goldsmiths despite its financial problems. When I was offered a position at another institution, I approached David Oswell who was on my hiring committee to speak about my working conditions in light of Evolving Goldsmiths. I asked him for nothing else than whether my contract will be valued in the situation that we are in. Concretely, I was asking for

- a. job security for 5-10 years (even though I have a permanent contract and passed probation);
- b. working conditions that will allow me to continue with research (I am on a research and teaching contract but feel that my research time is not being valued already and that this will only deteriorate in light of EG); and
- c. reasonable opportunities for career progression (I work way beyond my current Lecturer A position already)

Unfortunately, David did not find the time to even speak to me. All I was left with were two short, uncommitted emails, in which he did not engage with any of my concerns in a concrete way.

I will thus be leaving Goldsmiths in August. I understand that your strategy is based on getting rid of people. You are clearly successful in doing so. However, I doubt that it can even be in your strategic interest that enthusiastic and productive people who would have been well-needed to support Goldsmiths through difficult times are leaving.

Let me be clear, I am not leaving because of Goldsmiths' financial situation. I am leaving the College because of how you have chosen to address this situation in ways which I believe will dissolve rather than evolve Goldsmiths. The Warden's letter from 6 April was the latest sad proof that this was the right decision for me to take.

Sincerely,
David Brenner

Dr David Brenner
Lecturer in International Relations
Department of Politics and International Relations

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Dear Francis Corner
Warden of Goldsmiths

I have had the opportunity to be part of Goldsmiths during academic visits and have been impressed by its creative power. I know of no other academic space that shares this innovative and cutting-edge style. This is what distinguishes it from centers focused on meeting expectations set from an administrative exterior whose academic sense, I hope, will soon be called into question.

I have heard about the transformations that are being promoted and I dare to write to you with great respect so that you may consider the potency of Goldsmiths is what it has been. As the philosopher Baruch Spinoza has put it, potential is not what it can be, but what it is now being in all its efficiency. Evolving is not becoming competitive, but, as Piotr Kropotkin has argued, finding solidarity and mutual growth. This is what I have seen of Goldsmiths so far and what gives it its international prestige and recognition.

Please, with respect I ask, that Goldsmiths be a potency and not just another university administrative apparatus (which there are many).

Kind regards,

Dr. Jorge Castillo-Sepúlveda

Associate Member
Centre for Invention and Social Process

Jorge Castillo Sepúlveda / Professor
University of Santiago de Chile
Ecuador

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Subject: Response to your email of April 6th

Dear Francis,

I would like to make it known that I have also signed the collective response of the Goldsmiths community to the your email letter of 6 April. Personally, I found this email troubling and overly aggressive in tone, given all the emergency work that we've been putting into the College recently to keep our community in Computing intact and engaged and on track to graduate when this is all finished. I have attended your "open meetings" and read your emails and have a background in Industrial Management but I still don't understand the need for these sweeping changes nor the benefits of any of them other than to consolidate the power and decision making into the upper management, away from the experts on the ground, in the Departments.

I've worked at a few universities with both centralised and decentralised administrative systems and I can resoundingly say that decentralised is better for students and staff, in a small institution such as ourselves. I'm thinking of Ravensbourne, where I worked, trying this system and then dropping like a stone in the League Tables to near last. To be swayed from this view, I'd need at least an attempt at an argument or providing some evidence other than empty phrases around "hearing our voices." In my relatively short time here I've been introduced to some very intelligent and dedicated people who want us all to survive and flourish, so I find it very hard to understand this reticence in having a simple discussion around the proposed changes. I'd very much like to hear a better argument, even if its a bitter but honest truth and be convinced by it, but right now I am honestly feeling attacked, as do many of my colleagues that I speak with. I hope you can understand that this current situation is no good for any of us, and hope you reconsider your approach and take the Professors' recommendations to heart.

Best regards,

[Name Withheld]

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Subject: Message from the Warden re: open meetings

Wed 18/03/2020 11:09

Dear Frances,

Surely the Evolving Goldsmiths fiasco is being dropped until the next academic year when it can be properly addressed, with real input from staff and students into the future of the college?

It's going to take a long time for the university to recover its reputation from the mis-handling of the whole messy 'evolving/dissolving' business, and the lack of responsibility for staff and students health and well-being in the face of the coronavirus. Too little too late, and now this!

Teaching online is a learning curve and intensive work load, and right now no-one has the time or energy to keep on debating an ill-thought through re-structure. If you use the CV-19 crisis to push through your agenda, then you will lose any last hopes of regaining the respect of college. And I seriously don't think Goldsmiths will survive this fundamental erosion of trust.

I'm very worried that you are pushing us all to the brink. Please give up pushing, give everyone some space to cope with being split from their families across continents, being isolated, being ill and trying to stay well, and to deal with the soon coming reality of losing loved ones.

Right now I'm ashamed by Goldsmiths as an institution, although I am passionate about my teaching and am dedicated to the welfare of my students.

Best wishes,

[Name Withheld]