

Timeline of staff communications with the Warden, SMT, and Council February-April 2020

This document reconstructs a timeline of written staff response to the Warden and SMT following the announcement of Evolving Goldsmiths in January. It is during this sequence of events that the Professors' Forum was founded as a representative group to advocate for all staff to have a voice in making decisions about the future of Goldsmiths. We hope that the language we have used since the beginning in our conversations demonstrates collegiality, diplomacy, restraint, and respect.

The possible Vote of No Confidence is another event that arises in the timeline, far before the "11pm Friday email" the Warden moots in her communication of 6 April to all staff. The Professors' Forum has taken every reasonable measure not to use the VoNC as a threat, and indeed delayed triggering the vote in view of the COVID-19 crisis and above all in hopes of productive discussion with the Warden and SMT.

10 February 2020 [Letter from approximately 600 Goldsmiths staff to SMT](#)

This letter was a grassroots initiative organised by Michael Guggenheim in response to Evolving Goldsmiths. There are 583 signatories.

13 February [Open Letter to SMT from Goldsmiths professors](#)

This letter was a parallel grassroots initiative of senior academics organised by Angela McRobbie in response to Evolving Goldsmiths. The 66 signatories here formed the basis for the formation of the Professors' Forum.

21 February [Letter to Chair of Council from Professors](#)

This letter to Dinah Caine, chair of Council, was an of senior academics organised by Irit Rogoff in response to Evolving Goldsmiths. There are 54 signatories.

27 February [Statement by Academic Board members](#)

Letter to the Warden from members of Academic Board stating concern about the restructuring plans. 29 signatories.

10 March [Professors' Forum founding statement](#)

The founding of the Professors' Forum (PF) with an initial roster of 84 members and creation of the PROFORUM@JISCMAIL.AC.UK mailing list. This was sent to the Warden in an email found below in Annex 1.

17 March ['Involving Goldsmiths' group: second mass signatory letter](#)

A grassroots letter to the Warden organised by Marian Carty, with around 400 signatures.

17 March Publication of the [Alternative Goldsmiths](#) document

This document makes numerous positive suggestions for ways out of the Goldsmiths deficit.

Letters from Professors' Forum to Council

21 March [Professors' Forum letter to Dinah Caine, chair of Council](#)

26 March [Professors' Forum letter to Council](#)

01 April, ahead of Council meeting on 2 April [Professors' Forum letter to Council](#)

20 March Vote of No Confidence announced to Professors' Forum. (See Annex 2.)

23 March Pause in Vote of No Confidence

Email sent by the Professors' Forum Steering Group pausing the Vote of No Confidence. This was also communicated to the Professors' Forum at large. (Annex 2.)

03 April [Professors' Forum Steering group email to the Warden and SMT](#) following the meeting on that day

Annex 1.

Introductory email to Professors' Forum Founding statement

From: Atau Tanaka <a.tanaka@gold.ac.uk>

Subject: Founding of the Professors' Forum

Date: 10 March 2020 at 18:11:52 GMT

To: Frances Corner <F.Corner@gold.ac.uk>, Dinah Caine <d.caine@gold.ac.uk>

Cc: "PROFORUM@JISMAIL.AC.UK" <PROFORUM@JISMAIL.AC.UK>, Academic HoDs <AcademicHODs@gold.ac.uk>, Academic DBMs <academicbms@gold.ac.uk>, Elisabeth Hill <E.Hill@gold.ac.uk>, Helen Watson <H.Watson@gold.ac.uk>, Mark d'Inverno <dinverno@gold.ac.uk>, David Oswell <d.oswell@gold.ac.uk>, Carol Ford <C.Ford@gold.ac.uk>, Nirmal Borkhataria <N.Borkhataria@gold.ac.uk>

Dear Frances Corner, Dinah Caine,

cc: Professors' Forum, members of Senior Management Team, Heads of Department, Department Business Managers

encl: Professors Forum founding.pdf

I am writing on behalf of senior academic colleagues to consolidate recent communication I have had with The Warden, and that Prof Irit Rogoff has had with Dinah Caine as Chair of Council where we express our collective concern about the way in which Evolving Goldsmiths is being proposed.

We are extremely concerned about the forms of consultation (or lack thereof), and the potential detrimental long term impact of the plan. We, a significant group of professors at Goldsmiths, have therefore decided to come together and form a platform from which to speak and engage in constructive dialogue. We wish to draw upon our extensive and collective experience at this institution, its workings and its governance.

I attach a founding statement, with as annex the roster. We eagerly await your considered response.

Respectfully yours,

For the Professors' Forum,

Dr Atau Tanaka

Professor of Media Computing

Goldsmiths, University of London

Annex 2.

From: alternativegoldsmiths@GMAIL.COM

Subject: Vote of No Confidence

Date: 20 March 2020 at 17:38:22 GMT

To: PROFORUM@JISMAIL.AC.UK

Reply-To: Goldsmiths Professors Forum <PROFORUM@JISMAIL.AC.UK>

Dear PROFORUM,

First, apologies for the long message below but we want to update you in one email to reduce the number of communications. It is also in respect of the immense pressure and work we are facing at this unprecedented time that we have tried to keep emails and updates during this past week to a minimum. Please read this email fully and bear with us.

Over the past week, we (signatures below) formed an interim steering group of PROFORUM to focus our efforts on putting further pressure on the Warden, SMT and Council to respond to the demands set out in the many letters from colleagues across College calling for suspension of EG. This has

involved a **two-pronged** approach. The first has involved ramping up our call to **suspend EG** by challenging the conduct of the AB meeting next week, continuing to put pressure on Dinah Caine, and engaging in intense telephone discussions with Pro-Wardens. The second has involved working out the technical and logistical aspects of running the **Vote of No Confidence in the Warden and SMT**. Both strategies took some time and effort especially in light of all of the demands and pressures we are facing professionally and personally at this moment of national emergency and global pandemic.

We are now ready to call the vote. In good faith, we have given the Warden, SMT and Council ample time and opportunity to respond. They have left us with no choice but to take this action. If we wait any longer we will in all likelihood find that fundamental decisions and changes have been made without consultation.

We are thus writing to alert you about **how the vote will work**. The text of the call for a vote can be found at the end of this email and will appear on the voting platform, '**Choice Voting**'. We went with this platform to make a vote as formal as possible and to avoid using a system where people just indicate their position (with no anonymity). You will be sent an email from Choice Voting with a unique link to vote anonymously and the system will count the votes for us.

You will have three voting options. You must select only ONE option in the "All Candidate" section to actually submit your vote. Bear in mind that the platform assumes you are voting for a 'candidate' but in our case you are voting for one of the following 'positions.'

- I do NOT have confidence in Goldsmiths Warden and Senior Management Team
- I do have confidence in Goldsmiths Warden and Senior Management Team
- I would like to abstain from voting

The vote will open at **9 a.m. Monday 23 March and run until 5 p.m. Friday 27 March**. The link in the email will remain active throughout this time enabling you to reconnect again, see your vote and change it. **Please watch your junk/spam folder** since the email will come from Choice Voting. To be sure to receive the email, please whitelist noreply@choicevoting.co.uk.

IMPORTANT REQUEST: If you have any problems/issues participating in the vote, including if you do not receive an email on Monday, please **do not** email PROFORUM but contact alternativegoldsmiths@gmail.com.

Professors not on PROFORUM (about 26 of 143) have also been added to the vote. We are sending a separate email to them to explain more fully the Forum and to provide the same information as above about the vote.

We are calling for this vote at the same moment as we are ready with a constructive [alternative to EG](#) put together by a broad range of staff and students (led by Natalie Fenton) and hosted by GUCU that provides a very different vision of our future.

In solidarity and support to you all,

Natalie Fenton, MCCS
Des Freedman, MCCS
Bill Gaver, Design
Alan Pickering, Psychology
Irit Rogoff, Visual Cultures
Evelyn Ruppert, Sociology
Sanjay Seth, Politics
Atau Tanaka, Computing

VoNC

Over the past few weeks the [Professors' Forum](#) of Goldsmiths College has been seeking ways to engage constructively with the Senior Management Team over [plans](#) which will have wide-ranging effects on the governance of College life. We fully appreciate that SMT is facing serious and complex issues. At the same time, we — along with the [Goldsmiths branch of the UCU](#), a majority of [Academic Board](#), the vast majority of College staff and the student body and its representative, [Goldsmiths Student Union](#) — have been challenging SMT's assertion that 'Evolving Goldsmiths' is the product of a consultative process. There have been more than 1200 signatories to various [letters](#) demanding consultation and discussion across the College. We have made increasing demands for genuine democratic participation to take place and have requested that the SMT suspend 'Evolving Goldsmiths' in order that we can work together to deal with the challenges posed by the Coronavirus. None of these concerns have been seriously addressed. It now appears that SMT is attempting to push through the 'Evolving Goldsmiths' programme and to make significant changes to College ordinances at a time of national emergency when full attention is inevitably, and rightly, focused elsewhere.

Under these circumstances, and with great reluctance, we have come to the conclusion that SMT cannot be trusted to act in the best interests of the staff and students of this institution. For this reason, members of the Professors' Forum have initiated a vote involving all Professors in the College of no confidence in the Warden and the Goldsmiths Senior Management Team. We are taking this unprecedented step after careful consideration and with full regard to the interests of the staff and students of the institution.

Annex 3.

From: Goldsmiths Professors' Forum <alternativegoldsmiths@GMAIL.COM>

Subject: Pause in VoNC

Date: 23 March 2020 at 19:25:48 GMT

To: PROFORUM@JISCMAIL.AC.UK

Reply-To: Goldsmiths Professors Forum <PROFORUM@JISCMAIL.AC.UK>

Dear Colleagues,

We took some time today to give full consideration to the numerous and differing positions posted on the Forum and in other communications over the past few days concerning the VoNC. We also reflected on several fast-moving developments including the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) meeting of last Friday, Goldsmiths Leadership Group meeting of today (SMT and HoDs), Academic Board meeting tomorrow, an anticipated meeting of SMT on Thursday this week, and an extraordinary meeting of Academic Board now scheduled for April. We developed a strategy that seeks to build on what we consider is a critical moment and momentum, a strategy that weighs concerns about taking immediate action at the time of national emergency with the longer term democratic future and viability of our College.

It is with respect and consideration of all views that have been expressed on this Forum that we today sent the following letter to the Warden and SMT. In brief, we have paused the VoNC till Friday 27 March in recognition of this unprecedented moment to give the Warden and SMT the opportunity to also pause Evolving Goldsmiths. Details of our arguments and the assurances that we seek are in the letter below and we will not repeat them here.

We trust that you will appreciate how much thought and work went into doing this on our part as we also face much difficulty managing many demands and pressures. We will now put our attention to the AB meeting of tomorrow and further diplomacy and discussions throughout the next few days.

Goldsmiths Professors' Forum Steering Group

23/03/2020: 17:15 Letter sent to Warden and SMT

Urgent – Vote of No Confidence

Dear Colleagues,

Some of you will have heard of an imminent vote of no confidence (VoNC) in the Warden and SMT initiated by members of the Goldsmiths Professors' Forum last week. This action followed frustration that numerous letters, acts of communication and direct diplomacy over the past few weeks were not being heard. Nonetheless, we are now pausing that vote until Friday March 27th in recognition of the overriding concerns with providing our students and colleagues the support they need to finish the term and to minimize the damage to our institution as a whole. At every level of the college everyone is working flat out to reassure, support, lessen concerns, teach and administer – we have collectively demonstrated in action the rigour and collegiality shared by students and staff. Our overarching concerns are simultaneously providing for the students at every level, while not relinquishing democratic governance of the college due to the crisis at hand. While it has been communicated to us that the Warden recognises the flawed roll out of the EG plan, which will hopefully help with the mistrust across campus, this remains a formal rather than a substantive point and we need to move on to the actual substance of the proposal.

While the anger of staff remains very voluble, we also recognize that these are extreme times of unforeseen crisis. We would like to give you every opportunity to reflect on this determination to proceed with key elements of Evolving Goldsmiths in the face of opposition from across campus. However, our decision to pause this vote requires a statement assuring us all that EG will also be halted, otherwise plans for a Vote of No Confidence will resume.

In particular we are seeking assurances on the following 4 points in order to allow us to work together in the coming months and safeguard the future of our institution

1. No changes to the roles of and line management of HODs and DBMs;
2. An immediate halt to the recruitment of Executive Deans until there is further clarity of systemic responsibility and powers;
3. That decisions on changes to College ordinances, in the light of EG, at forthcoming meetings of Academic Board will be voted on;
4. That you will recommend to Council that it abides by the decisions of Academic Board in matters related to 'Evolving Goldsmiths'.

We ask that these assurances be given by Friday the 27th or the vote will be rolled out and taken to resolution.

Subsequently we would want to see a broad consultation that uses the knowledge and experience of members of the Goldsmiths community to engage in collaborative decision making that follows proper accountability structures - as laid out in the [Alternative Goldsmiths](#) document to think of how best, speedily to realistically work towards bettering the college's financial situation.

With best wishes,

Goldsmiths Professor's Forum Steering Group

Annex 4.

[Meeting materials](#) for 3 April 2020 between representatives of Professors' Forum, the Warden and SMT.

- Agenda
- Debrief notes
- Presentation Slides