

London, 17 March 2020

Dear Frances Corner, dear SMT, dear Goldsmiths Council,

You circulated the plan for “Evolving Goldsmiths” in January. In these plans you talk about “radical transparency”, being inclusive and consulting widely. Since then, there has been overwhelming opposition to the plans, from numerous groups in college, and as far as we are aware, there has not been a single voice of public support for “Evolving Goldsmiths”. There have been many collective letters signed by hundreds of staff, the majority of professors, many individual members of staff, by Academic Board and all campus unions signalling opposition to the damaging restructuring of Goldsmiths under the guise of cost saving and improving student experience. These letters are in addition to a number of protests attended by many people from all areas of the college.

Not only has there been near unanimous opposition to the plans, but contrary to your promises of consultation, you did not take any of these voices into account. If consultation on serious change is to be meaningful you need to listen and to take the outcomes of genuine consultation into account. None of your answers and actions demonstrate any willingness to do so. Your idea of “consultation”, as we have witnessed it so far, means sending various groups pieces of information, trying to play groups or departments off against each other, and then ignoring their views entirely - whilst presenting platitudes. Indeed, the "conversations" that have been had with the colleagues mentioned in your letter were simply one-sided presentations, from you, of "Evolving Goldsmiths". The very limited, formal consultations concerning the terms of the VS scheme and the change of line management reporting affecting DBMs, HoDs and SAs in no way constitute the meaningful consultation about the fundamental basis of "Evolving Goldsmiths" that we believe is required.

You said at the DTH open meeting that “change is difficult, and we all need to change”. This statement is insulting to Goldsmiths employees, many of whom are migrants, members of minorities or precariously-employed staff, whose lives are characterised by constant change and instability. Further, we do not oppose change, we *want* change, but a different *kind* of change. Note that a group of staff members had some time ago proposed the "Gold Paper", a proposal for organisational change which was ignored by SMT. Curiously, the one group of people, who do not want to change, is the SMT, which, incidentally, is the only group who will not suffer, but benefit, from “Evolving Goldsmiths”.

There are two crucial elements of “Evolving Goldsmiths”: A strengthening of SMT and the appointment of deans with a weakening of Departmental Business Managers and Heads of Department on the one hand, and the loss of academics, departmental administrators, professional and technical staff on the other. As SMT has said themselves, and as is abundantly obvious from your own accounting documents, these two measures will cost money and it is entirely unclear whether they will lead to any long-term savings. We are supposed to believe

that savings will magically appear in a "Stage Two" of "Evolving Goldsmiths". You are opaque about this stage, though it is difficult to imagine that you have anything but fixed conclusions about it.

As the many voices of opposition have made clear, "Evolving Goldsmiths" will lead to a worsening of student experience through the removal of actual student-facing staff and more costs through additional levels of bureaucracy. Many facing redundancy are precariously employed BAME staff members, who play a vital role in providing academic and pastoral support to similarly identifying students. The only reason you give for the appointment of deans is that they provide "dedicated leadership closer to the ground." How the addition of high-level bureaucrats could provide leadership "closer to the ground" than Departmental Business Managers and Heads of Departments mystifies us. You suggest that this will allow for the college to "work much more collaboratively", but we fail to see how a copy and paste change management programme imposed from above against the wishes of almost all staff members can achieve this. Alternatively, one might see the phrase "work much more collaboratively" as a disingenuous way of describing mergers and closures of departments and facilities. Instead, we should be looking at thoughtfully made joint ventures between departments, new programmes, new means of delivery, new ways of inclusively accessing education, amongst other measures that can meet our present challenges.

You continue to claim that the context is difficult, specifically with regard to student numbers, TEF and other regulatory issues. No one disputes this. These matters all need serious and strategic responses. But "Evolving Goldsmiths" and specifically the measures mentioned above do not address these issues directly, and you have shown no willingness to listen *and take on* any advice as to how the issues could be addressed differently. We insist that "Evolving Goldsmiths" is halted. The "workstreams" you mention seem to have fixed conclusions baked into them. They should be replaced by beginning a real process of consultation. We want to make meaningful change happen that will enable the college to thrive, not use a crisis to drive through a set of cookie-cutter reforms that will damage it.

The path you have chosen violates the Charter of Goldsmiths by not consulting with the Academic Board. It is disruptive to the good working atmosphere at Goldsmiths. It ignores the different needs of different departments. It leads to a worsening of the student experience. It does not lead to cost savings. It does not address management and accounting failures that have led to the deficit in the first place. We insist that these problems are actually faced.

As long as "Evolving Goldsmiths" is not stopped, and specifically whilst the new role of Dean is not yet revoked, we, the signatories of this letter, will not contribute to any of the workstreams outlined in your letter and will defend the interests of our university, our students and colleagues by not working towards putting any aspect of "Evolving Goldsmiths" into practice.

We remain committed to working to reduce the deficit and to improve the experience of colleagues and students. We insist that this should be done by constructive measures based on genuine collaboration and urge you to focus your energies on such an aim.

Yours sincerely

“Involving Goldsmiths”

Signed

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Yaiza Hernández Velázquez (Visual Cultures)

Shela Sheikh (MCCS)

Matthew Fuller (MCCS)

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Anthony Faramelli (Visual Cultures)

Yasmin Gunaratnam (Sociology)

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Eyal Weizman (Visual Cultures)

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Aeron Davis (MCCS)Richard

Catherine Hahn (Visual Cultures)

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Michael Zbyszyński (Computing)

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Naho Matsuda (Design)

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Linda Millar (Education)
Vicky Macleroy (Education)
Laurence Connor (Education)
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James Connick (Art)
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Michael Simpson (ECL)

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