



ISPP
International Society
of Political Psychology

20 November 2020

To: The Board of Governors and the UEL University Executive Board

Dear Colleagues,

As President of the International Society of Political Psychology, I am writing to express our sincere worry and frustration regarding the redundancies of the Social Sciences professoriate at the University of East London.

During these difficult times, UEL is not alone in facing deficits from the impact of covid-19, and we are aware that several universities globally are taking immediate action to safeguard their finances through voluntary salary reductions of senior management, freezing hires, and suspending temporary and short-term contract positions. Even in these tough times, it is rare for tenured and permanent staff to face redundancy. Indeed, your decision to proceed with the compulsory redundancies of colleagues who have invested significantly in your university and who hold leading international reputations is unprecedented, puzzling, and deeply worrisome. It also suggests careless disregard for employees' welfare, and little understanding that the physical and mental health of the people at universities is what allows them to be functioning communities.

The International Society of Political Psychology has close links with colleagues from the Centre for Narrative Research and the Centre for Research on Migration, Refugees and Belonging, so we can assert from first-hand experience that these colleagues have generated significant intellectual content, offered their mentorship to international scholars and students, and shown dedicated commitment to promoting social science research. They are appreciated internationally for their scholarship and for being proud representatives of UEL. Making them redundant poses a severe risk to the broad, radical, and creative research tradition at UEL to which they have dedicated their careers to building.

Bad news is not invisible. The decision to proceed with the redundancies of our social science colleagues will significantly damage the morale of your staff and the external reputation of UEL. It will profoundly disappoint academic societies like ours that have supported UEL, and will irreparably hurt the confidence of potential student applicants, future faculty applicants, and your graduates, in whether to risk investing themselves in UEL. Furthermore, the many colleagues who acknowledge the outstanding international reputations of our social science colleagues who face redundancies will respond to the news with shock and disbelief. They, like us all, recognise this is a very difficult time for higher education. However, the

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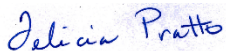
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“underperformance” of any institution should not result to penalties imposed on its staff. Universities are composed nearly exclusively of the people who make them; compulsory redundancies during a pandemic are insensitive, and they put at risk the physical and mental health of individuals who might be already under significant stress.

With these consideration in mind, we urge you reverse redundancy procedures and to engage constructively with the members of the professoriate you seek to dismiss. Wise and good-hearted people such as they are can surely collaborate in devising better solutions. The reputation for Social Sciences at UEL has been built by the long-term, immense (and internationally recognized) effort of our colleagues there. Dismissing them severely endangers not only them and their families, but the welfare of your staff and students and the international reputation of your institution.

Yours Sincerely,



Felicia Pratto, ISPP President, Professor, University of Connecticut,

on behalf of the Executive Committee:

Nicholas Valentino, ISPP Past President, Professor, University of Michigan

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