

August 8, 2023

Dr. Annette Trimbee
President and Vice-Chancellor
MacEwan University

Dear President Trimbee:

In this final year in my term as Provost & Vice-President, Academic, I write to seek reappointment to continue my work in support of *Teaching Greatness, Strategic Vision 2030*. The responsibilities I hope to take up, or continue, may be done only as part of a group of people, and the accomplishments I have had at MacEwan have only been as part of an extraordinary team. I am eager for what the future will bring our university, and I am proud of my time in this role, but I know that success in complex organizations is achieved only through effective work with others. Above all else, I am grateful for the many colleagues across campus whose exemplary capacity for collaboration plays no small part in what I set out below.

A strength of our strategic vision is that “Honouring our Place in O-day’min,” the sixth direction, stands alone but is threaded through the other five. I look forward to continuing to pursue its specific goals while staying mindful of how it guides us in pursuit of *Teaching Greatness*. I maintain that it is not the work of any university to reinforce orthodoxy but to dispute ideas, and the essence of our strategic vision allows us to do that work while committing to serving our community. Institutions with a global mandate may be challenged to define their communities, but while MacEwan aspires to influence the province, the country, and the world beyond, we are rooted in service to Edmonton’s downtown, our city, and the region. I am pleased to continue our efforts to provide the best undergraduate experience to students from our catchment area, first and foremost, and to admit and retain qualified, equity-deserving students in numbers that meet and exceed the demographic characteristics of Alberta’s capital region. We have had success with equity admissions that focus on qualified students seeking seats in competitive programs, and it is my intention to expand that approach to other programs while increasing retention efforts with greater wrap-around supports for all students who would benefit from them.

Similarly, we have been successful in recruiting faculty and staff that, increasingly, reflect our community. As we learn more about our present colleagues and about prospective job applicants, we have focused our recruitment practices to give individuals from under-represented groups a greater opportunity to be successful in the competitions we run. We write advertisements that allow applicants to demonstrate how their background, lived experience, and training prepare them to do the specific tasks associated with the positions to which we recruit. I have the discretion to appoint to faculty positions any applicant deemed qualified by a search committee, and I am committed to the use of this language in our collective agreement with the Faculty Association to diversify further the academy. Across our faculties and schools, we have given credit for the widest range of instructional activities and scholarly dissemination to colleagues who are pursuing career advancement, and I will expand professional development opportunities to help new hires from all backgrounds thrive here. I am proud of our cross-appointments between academic departments and kihêw waciston, itself relocated to a purpose-built space during my time in this office, and I hope to forge similar partnerships with other units on campus to further our recruitment and retention efforts. Besides creating supportive cohorts of new hires, cross-appointments of this kind allow us to enrich non-academic services for faculty, staff, and students within these units while adding important resources to diversify curriculum across our academic programs.

“Teaching Greatness” is not only what we call our strategic vision, it is its anchor. It has been my honour to have managed a purposeful expansion of faculty hiring since becoming Provost, increasing the percentage of sections taught by tenure-track and tenured faculty from forty-eight to sixty-two percent at a time when the commitment to permanent appointments has been in decline at many universities. I am satisfied to have ensured that academic affairs did not suffer a disproportionate cut during the decrease in our operating grant in 2019, and I am pleased to have been able to make subsequent reinvestments and reallocations of resources to support the student experience. Our completed administrative review across academic affairs positions us to continue the focused growth in Staff Association positions that began over the past eighteen months.

Our people are here to teach, and I am proud of my support for our teaching mission. Our instructors spend at least half their time in the classroom, and I have prioritized introducing our students as early as possible in their programs to senior members of academic staff. Our teaching centre was relaunched during my term to focus, once more, on support for classroom pedagogy, and we successfully implemented m̄skan̄s as our digital learning environment, a project that was a model of cooperation between administrative and academic governance at a time when other institutions struggle to work within a bicameral system. One of our greatest challenges has been to seek consistency across our many different disciplines and instructional modalities, and that is still a work in progress. We have found our greatest success thus far in supporting flexible delivery and in funding supports identified by faculty members as those that are most impactful to individual programs. I have also ensured that we remain focused on recognizing our most accomplished instructors, expanding our teaching awards program while aiming to nominate more potential 3M teaching fellows in the years to come. I would also commit, going forward, to prioritizing a number of internal research chairs whose work is in the scholarship of teaching and learning.

MacEwan University does an admirable job in connecting growth in scholarship with our commitment to teaching, and this to me is the key to success in “Trendsetters and Trendbreakers.” In my decade here, I have supported efforts to teach what we research, research topics we explore in the classroom, and examine best practices in teaching, itself. The character of this scholarship should persist, even as an increasing number of faculty members see more of their workload assigned to scholarly activity. I am pleased to have grown out the scholarship portfolio and to have seen increases in funding received, the appointment of research chairs, and more dissemination of scholarly work done by, and with, our students. Our commitment to work-integrated learning and community partnerships places us amongst leaders in the province in such engagement. With a new tactical plan for scholarship and a new policy on indirect costs of research, we have the structures in place to continue this momentum. Our scholars have done so much with modest facilities, and each time we have been able to grow our infrastructure—from our television studio to our fish lab—these spaces have been put to great use in research and teaching. We need to use every opportunity over these next years to expand further.

To that end, we know that MacEwan University will continue to grow between now and 2030. That is the promise of “Perpetual Motion.” Even if we capture but our historical share of new enrolments, we could see 25,000 students, and with opportunities to grow high-demand programs, we are likely to attract as many as 30,000 students, or 20,000 FLEs. It has been a significant achievement to have implemented a strategic enrolment management strategy over the past three years, and the present emphasis on managing the full cycle of interactions with prospective students through to their graduation underlines the importance we will place on retention efforts in our work. In addition, we have already seen a significant increase in the number of international students recruited, and with purposeful management we may come to have as many as ten percent of our students from abroad. I am committed to a registrarial process that makes us the quickest and most transparent Edmonton institution in terms of application decisions. Through your leadership, we have been successful in receiving a \$125m commitment for a new academic building, and I am thrilled to see that the synergies I have prioritized—the co-location of MacEwan International, Careers & Experience, and the Research Office with the School of Business at the center of campus—have captured the imagination of our community. I look

forward to realizing this new facility, with all its promise of expansion, as well as planning for reallocated space in Building 5 for science programming and in Building 7 for a student experience centre, where we can offer the supports of a “small school” to 30,000 students.

While most of my term saw us challenged by a worldwide pandemic, we learned resilience and flexibility, and these lessons animate our commitment to “Smash the Calendar.” MacEwan has always been nimble, but I am enthusiastic to use the digital tools with which we were forced to be more adept to offer more content to students in formats that suit different circumstances. We have seen how putting more material on *méskanâs* allows instructors to use classroom time for activities that are most impactful, and what has begun as more scheduling flexibility for both students and instructors will, I still believe, allow us to maximize use of our facilities as we grow. Increasingly, our exit options allow students quicker access to the workforce with valuable credentials, and they will between now and 2030 provide opportunities for students to return to upskill and reskill. I do not support a graduate school, but I am keen to continue developing post-credentials that appeal to graduates of two- and four-year programs, providing an opportunity to help MacEwan develop further its niche in our postsecondary system while allowing faculty members to do work beyond traditional undergraduate instruction. I have also committed to working towards a year-round campus, including the assignment of regular summer workload to interested faculty colleagues, and we have already seen much more activity this past summer than we did before the pandemic.

An emphasis on all these things helps maintain an experience that we describe as “Grand as a Griffin.” I am enthusiastically supportive of our place-based focus in the downtown, and I wish to continue to partner with anyone and everyone to ensure that this is a welcoming, secure space for members of our community. I have always been dismayed that we are seen and, for many people, experienced as a commuter campus. I associate such places as satellite locations on the outskirts of major municipalities. In spite of the challenges of downtown Edmonton, MacEwan University has the opportunity to develop over the rest of the decade as a hub of activity for our city. This requires us to put, front and center, opportunities for our students to engage beyond the classroom. Not only does our programming bring municipal organizations and businesses to our students, exposure to our activities here—from performances in Allard Hall and lectures in the Heart of the Robbins and the CN Theatre to hockey games at the downtown arena and soccer matches at Clarke Stadium—helps shape the identity students develop as Griffins. Perhaps the best illustration we have of the renewed focus on the student experience on-site is the dramatic investment we have made in student affairs, from growing our complement of counsellors to building the partnership at the foundation of our award-winning health centre. I am pleased to have realized the hub-and-spoke advising model envisioned by my predecessor and invested in our proactive and restorative approach to academic and non-academic student misconduct. Under your direction, we have expanded student financial aid to a degree without precedent at this institution, and I am proud to have focused that effort on students with financial need, removing many of the barriers to accessing those funds. We will do more to ensure that every admitted student will have the opportunity to persist and thrive.

There are so many things that have happened over these past years to contribute to our “grand” aspirations. Our model for academic leadership, where out-of-scope managers are seconded faculty members with knowledge of the classroom and the other work of academic staff, is the culmination of my greatest administrative ambition. Where other institutions have layers of bureaucracy, this has developed as a very flat structure. Rather than building a cohort of vice-provosts, we cycle a senior leader through the role each year to develop expertise and build capacity. I have overseen a series of leadership recruitments and reappointments, sometimes in the midst of very trying circumstances, and have put together a talented and collaborative team. The very existence of *Teaching Greatness*, passed unanimously by our Board of Governors and General Faculties Council, was a great achievement, and I enjoyed participating in its many related small group discussions and in fleshing out, during an address to the whole campus, what it would mean for academic affairs. Our move within the Post-secondary Learning Act gave me the opportunity to participate in the development of true bicamerality at MacEwan, and I

am proud of what we have built on both the academic and administrative sides. From GFC out to the standing committees of department councils, we continue to give priority to academic decision-making that is founded on the principle of subsidiarity, where knowledge at the local level informs our actions. Completing departmentalization was an important step in moving beyond organizing ourselves around credentials, seeking instead an academy where members from across campus engage in the growth of all our programs. We have a framework for academic program development, review, and quality assurance that I believe to be the envy of our system. It has allowed us to grow credentials like the Bachelor of Fine Arts and quickly revise initiatives like our nursing bridge. Different programs have different impacts, but I have argued that we should manage them all, as well as proposed credentials, by assessing the value our community sees in them. I have supported each of our faculties and schools in seeking to realize their full potential, and we have made demonstrable investments across the academy.

Over the course of my term, we built a Provost's Office, with its coordinating function in the management of governance processes in the faculties and schools, as well as living our commitment, working with Human Resources, to professionalize labour relations with the FA and MSA. We cleared a backlog of academic policy reviews that, in some cases, went back more than a decade, and we built a risk analysis mechanism that resonates with academic affairs. The development of Provost's Group as a complement to Executive Council and Deans' Council has been a significant achievement in our administrative governance structure. Here, administrators with an academic background discuss operational issues, and over the next few years we will be able to explore the impact these leaders have had and will have in the running of a university. There are now equivalent administrative groups in almost every faculty and school across campus. I am proud to have shepherded through governance the first mandate renewal in a decade and to have had that refresh of our undergraduate mission accepted by the provincial government. Similarly, I am pleased to have been part of the group that negotiated our first investment management agreements, helping align them with our operations while keeping the terms transparent for campus to see. We were the first institution in the province to write its own, stand-alone statement on free expression, again adopted unanimously by our Board of Governors and General Faculties Council, and I am proud, by having done so, to have adapted the Chicago Principles for use at an undergraduate institution in Canada. This has complemented my own emphasis on viewpoint diversity and academic freedom, which has been at the forefront of my priorities since my arrival here in 2013. Many institutions make flashy and dramatic commitments to institutional change, but if we review what we have been able to achieve through incremental progress—focusing on meaningful and impactful initiatives that truly stick, initiatives that enjoy the consensus support of a large percentage of our faculty, staff, and students—I believe that we have actually come much further in three, five, and ten years than have many of those other institutions. This has been most gratifying of all.

When I moved to Alberta more than twenty-five years ago, it was to join a university with an undergraduate mandate. It almost immediately sought “comprehensive” status. A decade ago, I was offered a chance to move to MacEwan, and it felt like coming home. My love for this place is genuine, and I have always believed that the administrative work I do, now, simply defines further the terms and conditions of employment that apply to me and will continue to do so when I assume once more my regular duties as a professor in the Department of English. For the period I am permitted to do this administrative work, I remain privileged to represent my colleagues as Provost in developing academic affairs to its furthest potential, the foundation of every university.

Sincerely,



Dr. Craig Monk
Provost & Vice-President, Academic

c: Helen Ngan-Paré, Associate Vice-President, Human Resources