December 2, 2024

Dean Dagmar Budikova:

Members of the faculty in the College of Arts, Sciences, and Letters (CASL) at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, supported by members of the broader community, express our grave concern over recent unilateral changes to the Winter 2025 course schedule by the CASL Dean's Office that have disrupted the College's functioning.

In the letter that follows, we outline the specific harms caused by these actions, reflect on the deeper values and mission of our college, and propose a path forward that prioritizes collaboration, transparency, and the long-term well-being of our institution and its stakeholders.

In early November, the CASL Dean's Office implemented instructional and curricular changes to the Winter 2025 schedule – including canceling classes, increasing class sizes, moving classes online, reducing the variety of upper-level classes, and targeting LEO faculty for partial or complete layoff – without prior announcement, without consultation or transparency, bypassing the established governance structures set out in the CASL Bylaws. For example, CASL Executive Committee meetings were canceled in the Fall 2024 semester even though the Executive Committee had not been informed of the forthcoming cuts and changes to the Winter Schedule. The Dean's Office has also failed to provide sufficient guidance to support students, faculty, and staff through this upheaval. These actions were taken after students had already begun registering for Winter 2025, and these actions and their consequences are still unfolding, with more course cancellations, increased class sizes, and LEO instructors being removed or given drastically reduced course loads—all while more students attempt to register.

The chaotic and inequitable rollout by the Dean's Office has undermined faculty morale, compromised educational quality, and fostered an environment of uncertainty and distrust, while simultaneously severely disrupting students' academic plans and placing an unnecessary burden on staff. It has also shown a callous disregard for all LEO lecturers, including long-serving faculty with multi-year contracts. LEOs are essential to our academic community, teaching over 50% of all undergraduate credit hours, playing a vital role in college and university governance, and in many cases, being proud alumni of the institution.

The failure to consult faculty or adhere to established governance processes set out in the CASL Bylaws has resulted in poorly planned decisions with far-reaching consequences. This reckless approach undermines the College's ability to function effectively and damages the quality of education we provide.

We acknowledge the pressing financial challenges the University faces. However, decisions of this magnitude must be grounded in data and analysis. For instance, the assumption that students will seamlessly re-enroll in another course when a class is canceled under them, without affecting long-term retention, is not supported by evidence. Studies from peer institutions indicate that canceling courses or abruptly altering degree pathways can harm

student retention, particularly among at-risk populations. Lacking robust data and careful planning, such actions could worsen the budgetary and enrollment issues they are intended to resolve. These are empirical questions that the Dean's Office could address with thoughtful data collection and analysis. Without such information, these measures are reactionary rather than strategic, risking damage to CASL's reputation and, by extension, the reputation of UM-Dearborn and the University of Michigan system as a whole.

Additionally, these last-minute decisions, to alter course caps and schedules after registration had already begun, have disrupted students' academic trajectories. Advisors and department staff – who were also not forewarned of the last-minute actions – have been forced to triage the needs of students whose degree plans have been derailed, and the lack of a clear plan to address these disruptions has left students and staff in a state of uncertainty. Students and their parents are already calling the Dean's Office to express their concerns. Thus, these actions also have the potential to harm CASL's relationship with the local community in Dearborn and surrounding cities and counties, which have long chosen us to meet their educational needs.

The Administration should also consider the reputational risks associated with dismantling programs and initiatives designed to enhance student success, and which have been heavily used to market UM-Dearborn to the public (such as small class sizes, the Foundations program, and high-impact pedagogy, including project-based learning and community-based engagement). Over the past several years, often at the behest of the Administration, faculty have invested significant time and effort into developing innovative courses and curricula that reflect best practices in teaching and learning. These include engaged and applied learning experiences that prepare students for meaningful careers and strengthen their connection to the University. By sidelining these CASL-wide and campus-wide initiatives and selling points, the Dean's Office is signaling that educational excellence is disposable. This message is further reinforced by the explicit suggestion that faculty address higher course caps by reducing both the quantity and quality of assignments and providing less feedback to students. This shortsighted approach jeopardizes the quality of the curriculum, threatens our accreditation, undermines the value of a Michigan degree, and seriously damages the University's public brand.

To address these concerns, we propose the following:

- 1) The Dean's Office must commit to transparent, data-driven decision-making. This includes sharing complete financial and enrollment analyses that justify policy changes, gathering data to test assumptions, explaining their theories of change, and conducting thorough before-and-after evaluations of potential impacts on retention, equity, and enrollment. The Dean's Office should immediately cease any actions that have not been guided by transparent, evidence-based decision-making.
- 2) The Dean's Office must follow the CASL Bylaws. Faculty governance is central to the University of Michigan, as clearly stated from the Regental Bylaws down to the CASL Bylaws, and it is essential to maintaining trust and effectively leveraging faculty expertise. The CASL

Executive Committee must play its mandated role in governance, reviewing and advising on decisions affecting education, instruction, and budgets. The Dean's Office should immediately cease any actions that have not been arrived at via governance processes set out in the CASL Bylaws.

3) The Dean's Office must reallocate funds from unnecessary administrative positions – such as the newly filled Associate Dean role – towards direct support for faculty-driven, high-impact educational initiatives. These initiatives should focus on enhancing student retention, improving academic success, and preserving the integrity of our curriculum. This approach will better align with the University's goals of academic excellence and student success, while minimizing the disruptive consequences of cuts to faculty and essential educational resources. The Dean's Office should also consult with faculty on the potential budgetary implications of the three newly approved tenure-track faculty lines, and CASL Exec should consider whether it is reasonable to proceed with searches under the current budgetary constraints.^{1,2}

The faculty of CASL, including both Tenure Track and LEO lecturers, are deeply committed to the University's mission and to delivering an education rooted in the values of equity, fairness, and excellence. However, the recent actions of the Dean's Office threaten to erode these values, compromising the quality of education we provide, and damaging the reputation of the institution and its leaders.

We urge you to take swift action on the above proposals to address these concerns, restore trust, and ensure that future decisions are made with the transparency, strategic vision, and commitment to excellence that are essential to protecting CASL's integrity and the reputation of UM-Dearborn.

CC: Chancellor Domenico Grasso CC: Provost Gabriella Scarlatta

UM-Dearborn Faculty Signatories:

- 1. UM-Dearborn Chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP)
- 2. Emily Luxon, Associate Professor of Political Science, UM-Dearborn
- 3. Maya Barak, Associate Professor of Criminology & Criminal Justice, UM-Dearborn
- 4. Alan Wiggins, Associate Professor, UM-Dearborn
- 5. Mike MacDonald, Associate Professor of Composition and Rhetoric, UM-Dearborn
- 6. Jennifer Proctor, Associate Professor of Journalism and Media Production, UM-Dearborn
- 7. Kristin Poling, Associate Professor of History, UM-Dearborn
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- 11. ¹Rose Wellman, Associate Professor, UM-Dearborn
- 12. Susan N. Erickson, Professor of Art History, UM-Dearborn
- 13. Nick Iannarino, Associate Professor of Communication, UM-Dearborn

- 14. Lara Rusch, Associate Professor of Political Science, UM-Dearborn
- 15. Anna Muller, Professor of History, UM-Dearborn
- 16. Paul Draus, Professor of Sociology, UM-Dearborn
- 17. ¹Camron Michael Amin, Professor of Middle East and Iranian Diaspora Studies, UM-Dearborn
- 18. Vadym V. Pyrozhenko, Associate Professor of Public Administration, UM-Dearborn
- 19. ²Shelly Jarenski, Associate Professor of English, UM-Dearborn
- 20. Dale Thomson, Professor, UM-Dearborn
- 21. Sally Howell, Professor of History, UM-Dearborn
- 22. Michael Dabkowski, Associate Professor of Mathematics, UM-Dearborn
- 23. ¹Arlo Clark-Foos, Associate Professor, UM-Dearborn
- 24. Troy Murphy, Associate Professor, UM-Dearborn
- 25. Suzanne Bergeron , Professor Emerita, UM-Dearborn
- 26. Bruce Pietrykowski, Professor Emeritus of Economics, UM-Dearborn
- 27. Margaret Willard-Traub, Associate Professor Emerita, UM-Dearborn
- 28. Nehal A. Patel, Associate Professor of Sociology and Criminology, Law, & Criminal Justice, UM-Dearborn
- 29. Dr. Jamie L. Wraight, LEO Faculty, Director of the Voice/Vision Holocaust Survivor Oral History Archive, UM-Dearborn
- 30. Tian An Wong, Assistant Professor, UM-Dearborn
- 31. Diana Ng, Professor, UM-Dearborn
- 32. ¹Ben Wielechowski, Lecturer II, LCA, UM-Dearborn
- 33. Pamela Aronson, Professor of Sociology, UM-Dearborn
- 34. Georgina Hickey, Professor of History, UM-Dearborn
- 35. Adam Sekuler, Assistant Professor, Journalism and Media Production, UM-Dearborn
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- 41. Tim Kiska, Professor, UM-Dearborn
- 42. Yulia Hristova, Associate Professor of Mathematics, UM-Dearborn
- 43. Velimir Stojkovski, Associate Professor, UM-Dearborn
- 44. Natalie Sampson, Associate Professor, University of Michigan-Dearborn
- 45. Imran Aijaz, Professor of Philosophy, UM-Dearborn
- 46. Nadja Rottner, Associate Professor, UM-Dearborn
- 47. Finn Bell, Assistant Professor, UM-Dearborn
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- 49. Julio Borquez, Associate Professor of Political Science, UM-Dearborn
- 50. Terri Laws, Associate Professor, African and African American Studies, UM-Dearborn
- 51. Terra Mauer, LEO Faculty, UM-Dearborn
- 52. Raya Samet, Associate Librarian, Mardigian Library, UM-Dearborn
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- 87. Fred Feng, Associate Professor, CECS, UM-Dearborn
- 88. Amy Brainer, Associate Professor of Women's and Gender Studies, Director of LGBTQ+ Studies, UM-Dearborn

Community Signatories

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- 91. Sean D. Johnson, Assistant Professor, UM-Ann Arbor Department of Astronomy

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- 124. Aliyah Khan, Associate Professor of English and Afroamerican & African Studies, UM-Ann Arbor
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- 126. tal ness, Assistant Librarian, UM-Ann Arbor
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- 186. Aya Elkadri, Student, UM-Dearborn
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- 203. Zeinab Bazzi, Student, UM-Dearborn
- 204. Jovan Gill, Student, UM-Dearborn
- 205. Zeena Mamesh, Student, UM Dearborn
- 206. Audrey Hansen, PhD candidate & GSI, U-M Ann Arbor
- 207. Abraham Faraj, Student, UM-Dearborn
- 208. Alexa Eisenberg, LEO Faculty, Lecturer III, UM-Ann Arbor
- 209. Martina Shimon, Student, UM-Ann Arbor
- 210. Dr. Michael Hill, Professor, Henry Ford College
- 211. Atia Siddiqui, Student, UM-Dearborn
- 212. Ben Westfall, Student, UM-Dearborn
- 213. Yassmine Majed, Alumni, UM-Dearborn

- 214. Anthony DeGenaro, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of English, Ohio Dominican University, Former UM Dearborn LEO Lecturer
- 215. Emily Devine, Student, UM-Dearborn
- 216. Valeria Garcia-Lopez, Student, UM-Dearborn
- 217. Olivia Suski, Student, UM-Dearborn
- 218. Justin R. Benson, CECS Student, UM-Dearborn
- 219. Penni Toney, Community Member
- 220. Hlaa Taher, Student, UM-Dearborn
- 221. Kathy Meyer, LEO Faculty, UM Ann Arbor
- 222. Kaitlin Guidarelli, LEO Faculty, UM-Ann Arbor
- 223. Ibrahim Alzawawi, Student, UM-Dearborn
- 224. Ava Abramowicz, Alumni, UM-Dearborn
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- 245. Rune Schoenberg, Student, UM-Dearborn
- 246. Sohan Ketireddy, Student, UM-Dearborn
- 247. Elijah Raupp, Student, UM-Dearborn
- 248. Gwyneth Foster, LEO faculty, UM-Ann Arbor
- 249. Moe M, Student, UM-Dearborn
- 250. Talha Rehman, Former Student, UM-Dearborn
- 251. Dr. Courtney Matthews, Tenure Track English Faculty, Henry Ford College
- 252. Jefferson Yarce, LEO Lecturer, UM-Ann Arbor
- 253. Shelly Drys, Community member, UM Dearborn
- 254. Sophia Mina, Student, UM Dearborn
- 255. Daniel Nemser, Associate Professor, UM-Ann Arbor
- 256. Amonte Brown, Student, UM Dearborn

- 257. Angela Warnemuende, Student, UM-Dearborn
- 258. Ahmed Haider, Student, UM-Dearborn
- 259. Skyler Babbitt, Student, UM-Dearborn
- 260. Melissa McLaughlin, Community Member, UM- Dearborn
- 261. Rimas Alabdullah, Student, UM-Dearborn
- 262. Nicholas Battishill, Community Member, UM-Ann Arbor and UM-Dearborn
- 263. Angie Berkley, Lecturer II, UM Ann Arbor
- 264. Ali Shapiro, Lecturer IV, UM-Ann Arbor
- 265. Dr. Mariel Krupansky, LEO Lecturer III, UM-Ann Arbor
- 266. Brielle Canares, Student, UM-Ann Arbor
- 267. Megan Bruce, Student, UM-Dearborn
- 268. Mohammad Serhan, Student, UM-Dearborn
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- 270. Elizabeth Rusanchin, Alumni, UM-Dearborn
- 271. Rullah Alhassan, Student, UM-Dearborn
- 272. Mackenzie Anderson, Student, UM-Dearborn
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- 275. Jennifer Kopp, Alumni, UM-Ann Arbor
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- 278. Sazeer Alam, Student, UM-Dearborn
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- 281. Robert W. Barnett, Professor, UM-Flint
- 282. Kazuko Hiramatsu, Professor of Linguistics, UM-Flint
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- 284. Mahdi Cheraghchi, Associate Professor of EECS, UM-Ann Arbor
- 285. Karmen Hollis-Etter, Associate Professor, UM-FLINT

¹ Addendum of Specific Concerns 1

Many in the Psychology discipline at CASL would like to express their support for the AAUP letter and emphasize the need for transparency, adherence to governance processes, and prioritization of faculty-driven, high-impact educational initiatives. However, we would like to clarify our position on one matter: Tenure-Track Faculty Searches. We strongly believe that the approved tenure-track search in Psychology should not be reconsidered. CASL Exec and Ad Council ranked this line as a top priority, and this search is well underway with candidates arriving on campus this semester. Psychology is one of the largest disciplines in CASL, serving a broad range of students, including majors, minors, and students from related programs such as Behavioral and Biological Sciences. Ensuring the continuation of this search aligns with the college's goals of enhancing student retention, academic success, and the integrity of the curriculum. Disrupting the search at this point would raise red flags and harm the reputation of our discipline, the college, and the larger university.

Signatories to Addendum of Specific Concerns 1

- Pam McAuslan, Professor of Psychology, UM-Dearborn
- Nitya Sethuraman, Associate Professor of Psychology and Director of Behavioral & Biological Sciences, UM-Dearborn
- Roger Loeb, Professor, Department of Behavioral Sciences, UM-Dearborn
- Susana Pecina, Professor of Psychology, UM-Dearborn
- Camron Michael Amin, Professor of Middle East and Iranian Diaspora Studies, UM-Dearborn
- Francine Dolins, Associate Professor of Psychology, UM-Dearborn
- Rose Wellman, Associate Professor, UM-Dearborn
- Patrick Beauchesne, Associate Professor, UM-Dearborn
- Arlo Clark-Foos, Associate Professor, UM-Dearborn
- Ben Wielechowski , Lecturer II, LCA, UM-Dearborn
- Harmony Reppond, Associate Professor of Psychology, University of Michigan, Dearborn

² Addendum of Specific Concerns 2

Like the Psychology discipline, many in English and AAAS, would like to express their support for the AAUP letter. However, we too strongly believe that the approved tenure-track faculty search for one English/AAAS joint hire should not be reconsidered, nor should the other two tenure-track faculty searches currently underway.

Of 15 line requests, only 3 were granted. We affirm psychology's statement that the continuation of these searches aligns with the college's goals of enhancing student retention, academic success, and the integrity of the curriculum. Moreover, these searches are not the prime issue, nor will disrupting these searches resolve the current situation. However, disbanding these 3

searches will exacerbate curricular and staffing issues within English/AAAS, and the other disciplines represented in and served by these 3 searches.

Signatories to Addendum of Specific Concerns 2

- Shelly Jarenski, Associate Professor of English, UM-Dearborn
- J. Caitlin Finlayson, Professor of English, UM-Dearborn