



Monday, 27 October 2008

DEPARTMENT OF
CHEMICAL ENGINEERING

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Dr. T. Williams
Principal and Vice-Chancellor
140 Dunning Hall
Queen's University

Dear Principal Williams:

I am writing with regards to the current situation involving Queen's staff considering the issue of unionizing. Queen's staff form an integral part of the university, fulfilling a critical role that is often undervalued and underappreciated. The support role they play is a key enabler of the primary functions of research and teaching at Queen's. Without their dedication and hard work (often taking place in the shadows), the more illustrious achievements of which Queen's is so proud would be compromised. I could not perform my own responsibilities nearly as effectively without the exceptional support I consistently receive from staff in a variety of functions around campus.

Despite the importance of their roles and the widespread recognition by faculty, staff are not always treated respectfully or fairly. That they remain the only major group of Queen's employees who do not have the benefit of strong, organized representation is an anomaly that should concern us all.

Tightening fiscal constraints are going to create pressures within the university, and those with the least power are likely to be disproportionately affected. Such a situation should be cause for

concern, for a demoralized and discouraged staff will not be able to provide the high level of support that enables world class research and teaching.

The essential spirit of a university is one of open inquiry and free discussion. It is perhaps, more than anything, that which defines the university as a distinct entity. As our staff consider unionizing, the preservation of this spirit needs to be carefully guarded for the common good of Queen's. The University needs to be careful to protect the ability of staff to access and exchange information about unionization. Staff facing the anxiety of an uncertain future should feel free to actively engage and participate in a process that so affects their future, fully supported by faculty and administration. The extent to which this occurs will be a bellwether for the spiritual well-being of this institution.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Cunningham". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end of the name.

Dr. Michael Cunningham, P.Eng.

Professor

Department of Chemical Engineering

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cc: Dr. Peter Dacin, School of Business