



Professor Stephen Toope  
Vice-Chancellor & Chair of the University Council  
The Old Schools  
Trinity Lane  
Cambridge  
CB2 1TN

18<sup>th</sup> March 2022

Dear Professor Toope,

**Re: The University Council Meeting of 21<sup>st</sup> February 2022**

We write to express our deep concern about the voting procedures at the University Council meeting of 21<sup>st</sup> February 2022, which instructed the University to respond to the Universities UK (UUK) consultation of USS employers by opposing the compromise proposal of the University and College Union (UCU) to settle the ongoing pensions dispute. We believe that academic self-governance, a key feature of our University, has been severely undermined.

The University Council's decision to reject the UCU proposal — which mirrored the University's position on the dispute, established in part by Grace of the Regent House (*Reporter 6504, 2017-2018, p.540*) — appears to have been decided by the minority of Council members (9 out of 25) who are 'unconflicted' by virtue of not being members of USS, that is principally the student members and the external members. Few serving academic or academic-related members of staff were able to vote, although they are precisely the staff best placed to understand the consequences of the decision for the University.

Although the University Council's position is itself concerning and consequential — potentially leading to an average 35% cut in guaranteed pensions — our primary concern in this letter is with the procedures that led to this vote. Three of the four external members of the Council are bankers or business-people. The fourth is a former vice-chancellor and economist who, in 2003, wrote to support a system of funding for higher education that placed "much greater reliance on fee contributions from students" (Greenaway and Haynes, *The Economic Journal*, 113, 2003, pp. F150-F166). The damage this system has wreaked is obvious to anyone working at university coal faces,<sup>1</sup> if not to all University Council members. The transformation of universities into competitive entities is, without doubt, one cause of the present pensions crisis.

---

<sup>1</sup>e.g. Jones, "Marketisation is Destroying Academic Standards through Rampant Grade Inflation", 2018 and Jones, "The Seven Deadly Sins of Marketisation in British Higher Education", 2019

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the views of the external members may have determined the outcome of the Council vote. However, the University is a direct democracy; the Council is a servant, which has a duty to express the views of the Regent House, rather than the views of its members, when it represents the University, particularly when these have been clearly established by Grace.

Each year, the Regent House demonstrates its fiduciary independence and self-restraint, when it approves by Grace salary and stipend changes which consistently reduce the incomes of its members in real terms (e.g. *Reporter 6558, 2018-2019 p.888*). We challenge the claim that being enrolled in the USS's pension schemes represents a significant conflict of interest that should legally exclude elected members of the University Council from voting. We believe that this is a tendentious argument based on a misinterpretation of charity law, which disallows active enrichment from a conflict of interest. Across the Collegiate University, USS members who sit on college governing bodies have similarly been told that they cannot respond directly to the UUK consultation because of a conflict of interest. If we might consider analogous claims: the argument implies that female members of Council or Regent House cannot be involved in decisions that might narrow the gender pay gap, because they stand to benefit. Similarly, ethnic minority members of Council or Regent House should not be allowed to vote on measures to narrow ethnicity pay gaps.

Given that this hugely consequential position taken by Cambridge University was based on the views of a minority of University Council members, we believe that there has been a fundamental violation of the principles of democratic self-governance on which the University operates. We therefore request that the Vice-Chancellor answer the following questions:

1. Were University Council members given a free vote on this decision of central importance to the future of the University?
2. If the answer to 1. is no, on what constitutional grounds were votes suppressed?
3. Will the University publish its response to the UUK consultation and explain how it reached its decision to reject the UCU proposals?

Yours sincerely,

the Branch Executive Committee, Cambridge University and College Union  
and those staff, former staff, students and former students of the University whose names  
appear below

Michael Abberton, Cambridge UCU Branch President  
Ali Abbas, MRC Epidemiology Unit  
Dr Anne Alexander, CRASSH  
Gavin Alexander, Faculty of English  
Dora Alexopoulou, Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics  
Edward Allen, Faculty of English  
Dr Carolina Alves, fellow of Girton College  
Ross Anderson, Department of Computer Science and Technology  
Stephen Andrews, Faculty of Biology  
Pierpaolo Antonello, Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages and Linguistics  
Dr Neil Arnold, Scott Polar Research Institute  
Tom Arnold-Forster, formerly fellow of Gonville and Caius College  
Massimo Asta, Faculty of History  
William Astle, MRC Biostatistics Unit  
Gareth Atkins, fellow of Queens' College  
Dr Adam Attaheri, Department of Psychology  
Dr Hugues Azérad, Department of French  
William Bajwa, Gonville and Caius College  
Andrew Balmford, Department of Zoology  
Graeme Barker, formerly of Department of Archaeology  
Maan Barua, Department of Geography  
Caroline Bassett, Faculty of English  
Jasmin Bath, Faculty of History  
Paul Bays, Department of Psychology  
Bruce Beckles, University Information Services  
Mustafa Beg, Faculty of Music  
Duncan Bell, Department of Politics and International Studies, Department of Politics and International Studies  
Peter de Bolla, Faculty of English  
Frank Bowles, University Library and affiliates  
Alexandria Boyle, Leverhulme Centre for the Future of Intelligence  
Oscar Branson, Department of Earth Sciences

Mary Brazelton, Department of History and Philosophy of Science  
Philippa Browning, formerly student at Selwyn College  
Bill Burgwinkle, formerly of Department of French  
Dr Christopher Burlinson, fellow of Jesus College  
David Buscher, Department of Physics  
Jeremy Caddick, fellow of Emmanuel College  
Melissa Calaresu, fellow of Gonville and Caius College  
Sara Caputo, Faculty of History  
Dr Gilly Carr, Institute of Continuing Education  
Philippa Carter, Faculty of History  
Joel Chalfen, Faculty of Education  
Hero Chalmers, fellow of Fitzwilliam College  
Prof Clare Chambers, Faculty of Philosophy  
Prof. Hasok Chang, Department of History and Philosophy of Science  
Dr A N Chester, fellow of Selwyn College  
Mark Chinca, Department of German and Dutch  
Andrea Chlebkova, Department of Physics  
Dr Áine Ní Choisdealbha, Department of Psychology  
Saimon Clark, Language Centre  
Ilana Cohen, Jesus College  
Camille Cole, fellow of Jesus College  
Sarah Colvin, Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages and Linguistics  
Philip Connell, Selwyn College  
Christopher Coomber, formerly student at Gonville and Caius College  
Daisy Corder, Pembroke College  
Catriona Corke, Department of German and Dutch  
The Reverend James Crockford, fellow of Jesus College  
Martin Crowley, Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages and Linguistics  
Neil Cunningham, Centre of Islamic Studies  
Muriel Dahan, Cambridge University Press and Assessment  
Susan Daruvala, formerly of Department of East Asian Studies  
Elizabeth DeMarrais, Department of Archaeology  
Rachel Demery  
Ruadháí Dervan, Department of Pure Mathematics and Mathematical Statistics  
Jack Dixon, University Library and affiliates  
Jelena Markovic Djuric, formerly of Cancer Research UK Cambridge Institute  
Dr Eleanor Drage, Leverhulme Centre for the Future of Intelligence  
Stephen J. Eglon, Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics  
Farida El Keiy, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies

Georgina Evans, fellow of St John's College  
Steve Evans, Department of Engineering  
Stephen Fagg, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies  
Luisa Fassi, Churchill College  
Daniel Field, Department of Earth Sciences  
Andrew J Field, Cambridge University Press and Assessment  
S W Finney, Faculty of Architecture and History of Art  
Rebecca Flemming, Faculty of Classics  
S. M. Flood, MRC Biostatistics Unit  
Dr Colin Fraser, former fellow of Churchill College  
Simon Frost, Faculty of Economics  
Prof Jennifer Gabrys, Department of Sociology  
Christophe Gagne, Department of French  
Renaud Gagné, Faculty of Classics  
Adam Ganz, formerly student at Fitzwilliam College  
Dr Lauren Gardiner, Newnham College, Department of Plant Sciences  
Vic Gatrell, Faculty of History  
Ardeshir Geranpayeh, Cambridge University Press and Assessment  
Sakshi Ghai, Department of Psychology  
Claire Gilbert, Cambridge University Press and Assessment  
Emma Gilby, Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages and Linguistics  
Peter Girling, University Library and affiliates  
Joe Gluza, formerly of Department of Computer Science and Technology  
Christian Goeschel, formerly student at Faculty of History  
Martin Golding, formerly fellow of Peterhouse  
Professor Raymond E Goldstein FRS, Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics  
Caroline Gonda, fellow of St Catherine's College  
David Goode, fellow of Wolfson College  
Priyamvada Gopal, Faculty of English  
Robert Gordon, Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages and Linguistics  
Mina Gorji, Faculty of English  
Jackie Grant, formerly student at Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics  
Mia Gray, Department of Geography  
Fiona Green, Faculty of English  
Jeremy Green, Department of Politics and International Studies  
Rob Gruijters, Faculty of Education  
Julia Guarneri, Faculty of History  
Nicholas Guyatt, Faculty of History

Susanne Hakenbeck, Department of Archaeology  
William Hale, University Library and affiliates  
Fergal Hanna, Department of Chemistry  
Philip Hardie, fellow of Trinity College  
Rachael Harris, fellow of Clare College  
Midori Harris, formerly of Department of Biochemistry  
Dr Eva Hartmann, Faculty of Education  
Prof. Jim Haseloff, Department of Plant Sciences  
Rowan Hawitt, formerly student at Faculty of Music  
Ronald S. Haynes, University Information Services  
Ian Henderson, Department of Plant Sciences  
Anita Herle, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Department of Social Anthropology  
Liz Hide, Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences  
David Hillman, Faculty of English  
Professor Mark Hindmarsh, formerly of Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics  
Dr Iona Hine, Faculty of Divinity  
Sarah Hoare, Department of Public Health and Primary Care  
Tom Hobson, CRASSH  
David Hoey, Sainsbury Laboratory  
Sean Holden, Department of Computer Science and Technology  
Cameron Holloway, formerly student at Robinson College  
John Hopkins, formerly of Faculty of Music  
Julia M. Hori, Faculty of English  
Dr. Sophia Hornbacher-Schönleber, Department of Social Anthropology  
Alex Houen, Faculty of English  
Sarah Houghton-Walker, fellow of Gonville and Caius College  
Jana Howlett, fellow of Department of Slavonic Studies  
Michael Hrebaniak, fellow of Magdalene College  
Taylor Hughson, Faculty of Education  
Dr Alice Hutchings, Department of Computer Science and Technology  
Leonardo Impett, Faculty of English  
Stephen Ison, University Information Services  
Guy Jacobs, Department of Archaeology  
Hubertus Jahn, Faculty of History  
Thomas Jaki, MRC Biostatistics Unit  
Liliana Janik, Department of Archaeology  
E A Jarman, Department of Archaeology  
Dr Sazana Jayadeva, Department of Sociology

Chris Jiggins, Department of Zoology  
Ewan Jones, Faculty of English  
Gwilym Jones, formerly student at Churchill College  
Dr Natalie Jones, Leverhulme Centre for the Future of Intelligence  
Jody Joy, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Department of Social Anthropology  
Anna Judson, formerly fellow of Gonville and Caius College  
Alexandre Kabla, Department of Engineering  
Dino Kadich, Department of Geography  
Solon Karapanagiotis, MRC Biostatistics Unit  
Dr Nigel Kettley, Institute of Continuing Education  
Alina Khakoo, Faculty of English  
Martin Kleppmann, Department of Computer Science and Technology  
Johannes Kromdijk, Department of Plant Sciences  
Dr Martina Kuvalja, Cambridge University Press and Assessment  
Martin Lucas-Smith, Department of Geography  
Paul Lane, Department of Archaeology  
Mary Laven, Faculty of History  
Sian Lazar, Department of Social Anthropology  
Hugo Leal, CRASSH  
Robert Lee, Faculty of History  
Hester Lees-Jeffries, Faculty of English  
Rachel Leow, Faculty of History  
Alice Levins, Institute of Criminology  
Manucha Lisboa, Department of Spanish and Portuguese  
Zheng Liu, formerly student at Department of Sociology  
Pedro Mendes Loureiro, Department of Politics and International Studies  
Raphael Lyne, Faculty of English  
Robert Macfarlane, Faculty of English  
Alyce Mahon, Department of History of Art  
Professor Willy Maley, formerly student at Jesus College  
Peter Mandler, Faculty of History  
Mark Manning, formerly of Department of Materials Science and Metallurgy  
Dr A T Marketos, Department of Computer Science and Technology  
Michele Martini, Faculty of Education  
Stephanie Mawson, fellow of St John's College  
Marina McCready, Clare College  
Augusta McMahon, Department of Archaeology  
Laura McMahon, Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages and Linguistics  
Peter McMurray, Faculty of Music

Isabelle McNeill, fellow of Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages and Linguistics  
Dr Ella McPherson, Department of Sociology  
Leo Mellor, fellow of Murray Edwards College  
Silke Mentchen, Department of German and Dutch  
Stefania Merlo, Department of Archaeology  
Thomas Metherell, Fitzwilliam College  
Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, Department of Anglo Saxon, Norse and Celtic  
Gos Micklem, Department of Genetics  
Marta Mirazon Lahr, Department of Archaeology  
Steph Moore, MRC Epidemiology Unit  
Natalia Mora-Sitja, Faculty of History  
Renaud Morieux, Faculty of History  
Cora Morris, Faculty of Human, Social and Political Science  
Helen Mott, Department of Biochemistry  
Clément Mouhot, Department of Pure Mathematics and Mathematical Statistics  
Subha Mukherji, Faculty of English  
Naoise Murphy, Department of Politics and International Studies  
Anjum Nahar, Murray Edwards College  
Joshua Nall, Department of History and Philosophy of Science  
David Nally, Department of Geography  
Professor Yael Navaro, Department of Social Anthropology  
Francis Neary, Darwin Correspondence Project, University Library and affiliates  
Sophie Marie Niang, Department of Sociology  
Yvonne Nobis, University Library and affiliates  
Erik Tommy Nyberg, MRC Biostatistics Unit  
Alan O'Callaghan, MRC Biostatistics Unit  
Jarrah O'Neill, Department of Sociology  
Jess O'Thompson, Faculty of Law  
Amy Orben, MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit  
Darerca Owen, Department of Biochemistry  
Folarin Oyeblu, MRC Biostatistics Unit  
Esra Ozyurek, Faculty of Divinity  
Y. Papadodimitraki, Department of Computer Science and Technology  
Danika Parikh, Fitzwilliam Museum  
Ian Patterson, fellow of Queens' College  
Dr Brian Patton, formerly student at Trinity College  
Suzanne Paul, University Library and affiliates  
Camilla Penney, Junior Research Fellow in Earth Sciences, fellow of Queens' College  
Anna Pensaert, University Library and affiliates



Kate Peters, fellow of Murray Edwards College  
Daniel Pett, Fitzwilliam Museum  
Jeff Phillips, fellow of Faculty of Philosophy  
Richard C. Powell, Department of Geography  
Robert Pralat, Department of Sociology  
Dr Anna V. Protasio, fellow of Christ's College  
Judy Quinn, Department of Anglo Saxon, Norse and Celtic  
Sarah A Radcliffe, Department of Geography  
Pedro Ramos Pinto, Faculty of History  
Michael Rand, Department of Middle Eastern Studies  
Tim Rayner, formerly of Cancer Research UK Cambridge Institute  
Keith Reader, formerly student at Downing College  
D.I. Redhouse, Department of Archaeology  
Alice Reid, Department of Geography  
Dr Hugo Reinert, formerly student at Scott Polar Research Institute  
John David Rhodes, Department of Italian  
Michael Rice, Institute of Criminology  
Professor John Robb, Department of Archaeology  
David Robertson, MRC Biostatistics Unit  
Dr Martin A. Ruehl, Department of German and Dutch  
Corinna Russell, fellow of Emmanuel College  
Richard Saich, Faculty of History  
Simon Schaffer, Department of History and Philosophy of Science  
Carola-Bibiane Schönlieb, Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics  
Anna Schroeder, MRC Epidemiology Unit  
Giulia Sciolli, Department of Social Anthropology  
Malcolm Scott, Department of Computer Science and Technology  
Ruth Scurr, fellow of Gonville and Caius College  
Shaun Seaman, MRC Biostatistics Unit  
Suchitra Sebastian, Department of Physics  
R. W. Serjeantson, Faculty of History  
Peter Sewell, Department of Computer Science and Technology  
Sujit Sivasundaram, Faculty of History  
Kate Spence, Department of Archaeology  
Daniel St Johnston, Gurdon Institute  
Richard Staley, Department of History and Philosophy of Science  
Gareth Stedman Jones, formerly of Faculty of History  
Elsa Strietman, formerly of Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages and Linguistics  
Helen Strudwick, Fitzwilliam Museum

Tom Sutch, Cambridge University Press and Assessment  
Joe Sutliff Sanders, Faculty of Education  
Zoe Svendsen, Faculty of English  
Sue Swaffield, formerly student at Homerton College  
Hillary Taylor, Faculty of History  
Brian Tom, MRC Biostatistics Unit  
Dr Giulia Torino, fellow of Peterhouse  
Rebekah Treganna, Department of Politics and International Studies  
Ted Tregear, fellow of Gonville and Caius College  
Chara Triantafyllidou, Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics  
Alexandre da Trindade e Oliveira, Faculty of Education  
Clare Trowell, University Library and affiliates  
Kate Tunstall, formerly student at Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages and Linguistics  
Bettina Varwig, Faculty of Music  
Alessio Veneziano, Department of Archaeology  
Vincenzo Vergiani, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies  
Dr David Wallis, Department of Earth Sciences  
Dr Sally Ward, Faculty of Biology  
Ruth Watson, Faculty of History  
Steve Watts, formerly fellow of Homerton College  
Sheila Watts, Department of German and Dutch  
Prof Alex Webb, Department of Plant Sciences  
Owen Weller, Department of Earth Sciences  
Lewis Westwood Flood, Jesus College  
Raymond Wightman, Faculty of Biology  
Clair Wills, Faculty of English  
Ross Wilson, Faculty of English  
Ian Wilson, Department of Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology  
Edward Wilson-Lee, fellow of Sidney Sussex College  
Sheila Windley, formerly of Unified Administration Service  
Adam Woodhouse, fellow of Robinson College  
Dr Lucy Wrapson, Fitzwilliam Museum  
Nicolette Zeeman, Faculty of English  
Andrew Zurcher, fellow of Queens' College