

MASSEY UNIVERSITY'S 'DIGITAL PLUS' DISCUSSION DOCUMENTS

TEU Executive Summary

On 24 February, the Pro Vice Chancellor of Massey University's Colleges of Sciences released the discussion document *A future academic plan for the College of Sciences*. In the weeks following, similar discussion documents were circulated by the respective Pro Vice Chancellors of the University's College of Health (26 February), Business School (02 March), and College of Humanities and Social Sciences (16 March). The Pro Vice Chancellor of the College of Creative Arts has stated that there is no intention to release a discussion document relating to that College.

The discussion documents outlined a "series of possible changes" to the various Colleges' academic portfolios; the rationales for the potential changes; and, the processes by which feedback was to be submitted.

Although the gravity of the potential changes varies across the Colleges, the underlying rationale hinges on the University's intent to implement a number of "strategic shifts" – including its Digital Plus strategy – whilst ensuring financial sustainability.

The discussion documents, if progressed, will lead to a restructuring of where and how subjects are taught, and to the development of change management documents that would result in the disestablishment of courses, as well as job losses.

Working together the TEU membership and staff have put together responses to the discussion documents.

Together we have expressed strong concerns surrounding both the implications of the changes being proposed by the Senior Leadership Team, as well as, with the exception of the Massey Business School, the glaring lack of consultation that went in to the drafting of the discussion documents.

At a paid union meeting the following resolutions were passed:

1. We reject the massively defective consultation process categorically on these discussion documents;

2. We reject the displacement of face-to-face provision of teaching and learning by the online provision of teaching and learning.

This response is founded on

- the poor timing of the release of the documents (at the start of semester when staff and students are under extreme pressure);
- the ambiguous and misleading information contained in the discussion documents;
- the fact that the parameters of the 'potential changes for discussion' have already been set by two 'policies' which weren't debated by the staff of the university; and,
- the insufficient amount of time given for submitting robust feedback.

Added to this, the University's explicit resistance toward withdrawing the discussion documents in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to the anxiety and diminishing wellbeing of its own students and staff – a fact that has led many members to question the University's ethical integrity and willingness to operate in good faith.

For an institution that is ostensibly Tiriti-led and prides itself on its Wellbeing Strategy, the actions of Massey University's Senior Leadership Team are thoroughly unacceptable.

TEU cannot support the 'potential changes for discussion' put forward by the Senior Leadership Team and recommends that the Vice Chancellor, Professor Jan Thomas, immediately withdraw each of the College's respective discussion documents.



TEU

TERTIARY EDUCATION UNION
TE HAUTŪ KAHURANGI

Submission of

Te Hautū Kahurangi | Tertiary Education Union

to

Massey University's College of Health

on the

**Discussion Document *A future academic plan for the College
of Health***

18 March 2020

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Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Background.....	5
3. Context and rationale for the potential changes	5
4. Digital Plus – an absence of risk analysis and substantive data	6
5. Optimisation of specialised infrastructure	7
6. No and Low Enrolments Policy and Procedures – implemented to justify pre-decided changes.....	8
7. College of Health financial environment – insufficient data.....	9
8. College of Health enrolments – insufficient data.....	9
9. Potential changes for discussion.....	10
10. Additional concerns.....	12
11. Conclusion.....	14

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Te Hautū Kahurangi | Tertiary Education Union (TEU) welcomes this opportunity to respond to the discussion document *A future academic plan for the College of Health*.
- 1.2. The TEU is the largest union and professional association representing nearly 10,000 academic and general/allied staff in the tertiary education sector (in universities, institutes of technology/polytechnics, wānanga, private training establishments, and REAPs).
- 1.3. The TEU actively acknowledges Te Tiriti o Waitangi as the foundation for the relationship between Māori and the Crown. We recognise the significance of specific reference to Te Tiriti o Waitangi in the Education Act and the emergent discourse resulting from this. We also accept the responsibilities and actions that result from our nation's signing of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- 1.4. The TEU expresses its commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi by working to apply the four whāinga (values) from our *Te Koeke Tiriti* framework as a means to advance our TEU Tiriti relationship in all our work and decision-making – with members and when engaging on broader issues within the tertiary sector and beyond – such as our response to this discussion document:

Tū kotahi, tū kaha: We are strong and unified; we are committed to actions which will leave no-one behind; we create spaces where all people can fully participate, are fairly represented, and that foster good relationships between people.

Ngā piki, ngā heke: We endure through good times and bad; we work to minimise our impact on the environment; we foster ahikā – the interrelationship of people and the land, including supporting tūrangawaewae – a place where each has the right to stand and belong.

Awhi atu, awhi mai: We take actions that seek to improve the lives of the most vulnerable; we give and receive, acknowledging that reciprocity is fundamental to strong and equitable relationships; and we work to advance approaches that ensure quality public tertiary education for all.

Tātou, tātou e: We reach our goals through our collective strength and shared sense of purpose, which are supported through participatory democratic decision-making processes and structures.

- 1.5. Our response to the discussion document *A future academic plan for the College of Health* stems from our commitment to the whāinga expressed above and our wish to see these enacted in the tertiary education sector and in our society and communities.
- 1.6. Our submission has been informed by the views of our members who work as members of staff at Massey University. Engagement with our members occurred during early-mid March via email correspondence, phone conversations, an online survey which gained more than 110 responses, in-person meetings at the Albany and Manawatū campuses, and a paid union meeting across all three Massey campuses on Thursday 12 March.
- 1.7. During the paid union meeting, the following resolutions were passed:
 - 1.7.1. We reject the massively defective consultation process categorically on these discussion documents
 - 1.7.2. We reject the displacement of face-to-face provision of teaching and learning by the online provision of teaching and learning
- 1.8. As such, the TEU does not support the 'potential changes' outlined in the discussion document.
- 1.9. Furthermore, members have voiced strong concerns about the lack of background information in Sections 2.0 and 3.0 regarding the Digital Plus strategy, the No and Low Enrolments Policy, and the CoH's financial and enrolment data.
- 1.10. Members have identified serious issues regarding the processes by which the document came about, including: the timing of the release of the document; the lack of consultation with staff as the document was being formulated; the notion that the parameters surrounding potential changes have already been set; and, the insufficient amount of time allowed for providing feedback on the document. Taken together, these factors have produced anxiety and uncertainty leading to undesirable impacts on the wellbeing of staff; many of whom perceive the actions of the Senior Leadership

Team (SLT) as going against principles that ostensibly underlie the University's own ethics and regulations.

2. Background

- 2.1. On 26 February 2020, the Pro Vice Chancellor of Massey University's College of Health, Professor Jane Mills, released the discussion document *A future academic plan for the College of Health*.
- 2.2. The document outlines a "series of potential changes" (5) to the College of Health's (CoH) academic portfolio; the context and rationale for the potential changes; and, lastly, the processes and timeline for feedback on the potential changes and contents of the document.
- 2.3. In short, the document outlines a situation that requires a number of potential changes if the CoH is to implement the University's wider "strategic shifts," including its Digital Plus strategy, as well as remain financially sustainable (5).

3. Context and rationale for the potential changes

- 3.1. With regard to the context and rationale for the potential changes, the document presents an overview of the situation faced by the CoH including internal factors such as the wider strategic direction of the University, as well as external factors such as the financial environment within which the CoH is currently required to operate. Additionally, Section 3.0 of the document outlines an assessment of the CoH's recent enrolment trends in relation to the wider strategic and operational criteria of the University.
- 3.2. More specifically, the internal factors linked to the future direction of the University involve a number of "strategic shifts" which are framed as having "important implications for the 'what,' 'where,' and 'how' of the CoH's teaching and learning activities" (7). These 'shifts' – developed by the University's SLT – include:
 - the Digital Plus strategic concept;
 - the optimisation of specialised infrastructure; and,
 - a newly implemented policy involving a set of procedures for monitoring courses which consistently have no or low enrolments.

4. Digital Plus – an absence of risk analysis and substantive data

- 4.1. Many members have voiced frustration at the lack of clarity and detail surrounding what the implementation of the Digital Plus strategy will actually entail. As such, some members remain unsure as to whether it is something that they would support:

I have found the articulation of what the strategy actually is too vague to know whether I support it or not. I want to know exactly what “world class online teaching” looks like IN PRACTICAL TERMS and how it will be resourced within our university before signing up to this strategy.

- 4.2. Others have pointed out that digital education only works when implemented in moderation, and that if a greater degree of digitisation is to occur, such a strategy needs to consider lessons from the past:

[Digital Plus] places huge faith in technology as the vehicle for instruction. Digital Plus should be a tool that we use to support our students’ learning but it must never become the dominant pedagogy. If it does then tutors and lecturers will become mere technicians whose job is to deliver a set and rigid curriculum. There is a lengthy history of trying similar initiatives in our educational past and all have failed.

[...] The digital policy is uninformed about education and draws on technological thinking that has to date in human history caused suffering and dislocation. It is a wrong turn.

- 4.3. Indeed, the nature of some subjects mean that they are not conducive to being taught solely via online provision; face-to-face learning is vital in many cases:

Not all disciplines can be taught properly via an online option. A number of disciplines such as nursing, psychology, and social work require personal contact to train [learners] to registration standards.

- 4.4. Furthermore, given the extent and implications of the potential changes tied to Digital Plus – including the associated potential job losses – members believe that the SLT has acted negligently by failing to include any type of cost or risk analysis as part of the rationale for the potential changes:

Theoretically, the Digital+ strategy may make sense; in practice it has major flaws and I think it will lead to a fall in student enrolments and experienced and talented staff choosing redundancy over relocating to a different city.

The problem here is the wording was vague about what an 'anchor campus' actually means. There are some programmes like Psychology which are strong at all three campuses so justify a presence there. There may be some others where a multi-campus presence should be reviewed. Another problem is that SLT seems to think that students will voluntarily go to another campus if they want to study a subject but I suspect we will lose many students because of this.

5. Optimisation of specialised infrastructure

- 5.1. In conjunction with all subjects having a single anchor campus, the Digital Plus strategy intends to optimise the quality and use of specialised physical infrastructure by locating it at only one geographic or anchor campus site. The rationale here is that higher quality infrastructure is easier to maintain at a single site, and that greater teaching and research excellence will be facilitated by creating a "critical mass" of academic and technical staff at a single location (7).
- 5.2. Members see this aspect of the University's strategy as being unnecessary, misguided, overly ambitious given Massey's current IT infrastructure, and lacking in substantive support given the far-reaching potential implications for staff, students, and Massey's reputation:

Behind the marketing jargon, I have no real sense of exactly what 'Digital +' is supposed to encompass or be. Many of us are already teaching at least partly online and have been doing so for years. How will this be different? And if we are already doing this successfully from different campuses, why the need to spend a fortune to create 'anchor' campuses? [...] [T]hose of us who have been teaching online/digitally for years (including e.g. by video-link across campuses) know all too well that Massey's IT infrastructure is not up to the task of supporting current needs let alone this 'brave new world.' In my area, we are doing some very innovative digital pedagogy but have had to largely figure out the tech solutions and implement them ourselves, without help from IT.

6. No and Low Enrolments Policy and Procedures – implemented to justify pre-decided changes

- 6.1. The third “strategic shift” outlined in the document is a policy for identifying ‘low enrolment’ courses, specialisations, and qualifications. Developed and approved by the SLT, the policy stipulates a threshold criterion relevant to the EFTS of undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications and courses. The policy establishes a threshold for *monitoring* – as opposed to a threshold for *disestablishing* – courses and qualifications; the rationale being that it allows University managers to “make evidence-based decisions regarding the future of courses, specialisation[s] and qualifications not meeting these thresholds” (7-8).
- 6.2. Members are unsure about the detail of the No and Low Enrolments Policy, its implications, and how and when it was devised. Given that the policy is dated as ‘New February 2020,’ many members hold the view that the policy was developed primarily as a way to help justify the overarching Digital Plus strategy – in particular, the restructured campus differentiations.

Discontinuation of courses due to low enrolments needs to be considered on a case-by-case basis, not a blanket policy; and any policy must be the result of consultation with academics, not announced when complete by senior management.

- 6.3. Added to this, the policy lacks nuance and understanding regarding the function and necessity of some courses that tend to have low enrolments:

The devil is in the detail. Clearly, if a paper is consistently attracting very low enrolments it needs to be reviewed. There may, however, be a strategic justification for these papers, particularly if they are a pathway into postgraduate research.

There is a case to be made for looking at courses that don’t attract students and asking if they should still be running or if they need to be updated or transformed. However, this should not be done simply ‘by the numbers.’ Courses with low numbers can be extremely important for many reasons and the decision to keep or retire a course or programme should be made

on pedagogical and public good grounds, not based solely on EFTS and money.

7. College of Health financial environment – insufficient data

7.1. With regard to the financial environment of the CoH, the document states that, despite having improved its financial situation over the past three years, budget forecasting indicates that the CoH will face significant financial pressures in 2020. The reasons given for the budgetary pressures include:

- a decline in government funding;
- constraints on increasing domestic and international student fees;
- ‘flat’ domestic student numbers;
- an uncertain international student market due to, among other things, the impacts of coronavirus;
- increased costs pertaining to “uncontrollable Central Overheads” (9); and,
- remaining on track to achieve the CoH’s contribution (\$2.8M) to the Council-approved Massey University overall operating surplus (9).

7.2. Again, given that much of the impetus behind the potential changes revolves around addressing financial pressures and meeting target surpluses, the information in Section 2.2 which outlines the CoH’s financial environment is severely lacking in substantive detail and evidence. Members consider the omission of any cost and/or risk analysis in the document as illustrative of the SLT’s heedless approach to changes that will, if implemented, inevitably have considerable consequences for staff and students.

8. College of Health enrolments – insufficient data

8.1. Regarding recent enrolment trends, Section 3.2 of the document states that 65% of the CoH’s course offerings do not meet the enrolment threshold specified in the newly implemented policy surrounding no and low enrolments (10-11).

8.2. Although Section 3.2 provides detail on recent enrolment trends within the CoH, there is no allusion to the reasons for some courses having consistently low or no enrolments. Here, some members have noted that diminished enrolment numbers in recent years are partly attributable to problems with Massey’s IT infrastructure. These

technical issues have led to students being unable to navigate the enrolment process or adequately fulfil the enrolment criterion, meaning that, in some cases, they eventually enrolled at an alternate university that offers similar courses.

9. Potential changes for discussion

- 9.1. Section 4.0 of the document outlines the 'potential changes for discussion' which would "maintain Massey University's engagement in and delivery of a broad range of health disciplines, with clear differentiation of activities based on the Wellington, Auckland, and Manawatū campuses" (12).
- 9.2. The potential changes mean that Auckland would be the anchor campus for health biosciences, occupational health and safety, and nursing; Manawatū would be the anchor campus for social work, mental health and addiction, sport, community development, and rural health; and, Wellington would be the anchor campus for public health, environmental health, and research centred on understanding health, disease, and sleep (12-13).
- 9.3. The document notes that some areas – health sciences, nursing, and social work – require further thought and discussion before moving forward. However, Health Biosciences, Social Work, Nursing, and Occupational Health and Safety are each identified as "requiring an element of change in order to align with the Digital Plus strategy" (13). More specifically, Section 4.2 of the document notes that, among other changes, Occupational Health and Safety activity would cease at Manawatū in order to be anchored at Auckland, and Social Work activity would be anchored at Manawatū (16-18).
- 9.4. There is insufficient consideration or detail as to what the potential consequences of campus differentiation for staff and students will entail – least of all any explicit mention of job cuts. As one member noted:

[...] Shifting staff and students between campuses is presented as a solution, but fails to acknowledge that staff have families, connections, mortgages, etc. at a given place... we cannot just uproot! Also, students might not have the chance or interest to move to another city... many live at home and do not have the means to move. Even if they are given the option (or rather, forced to) study online, there is NO EVIDENCE available to indicate that

vulnerable students will be looked after. We have many students that suffer depression, anxiety, etc. (staff too), and the campus interactions are often the most significant interaction with a community [...]

- 9.5. Importantly, others highlighted the fact that consolidation and the associated potential job losses would have implications for the way in which many classes are delivered given that staff often operate in creative and collaborative ways:

[...] the reality is that, for instance, we have a mix of staff across campuses, actually working together to deliver both internal and extramural classes. To think that you can look from the outside and decide that this programme should be anchored here, and think you can get rid of the staff at the other campus ignores the fact that many of the staff at the 'non-anchor' campus are actually supporting delivery of teaching to students at this fictional 'anchor' campus and so to lose staff is to lose the capacity to deliver programmes at the anchor campus. It also ignores the different ways that students might be 'internal' or extramural and the pathways that individual students might take through their degrees that mean that we lose our pipeline of students because they can no longer come internally at the beginning of their degree because the 'anchor' campus is not close by.

[...] I am not convinced that the demand for Distance that the university thinks is there in fact exists; nor that that apparent demand (in comparison to internal teaching) isn't merely the result of the extremely poor marketing of our internal offerings over the past years. My experience with experimenting with blended learning is that this is not a mode that internal students want or value, and I suspect that they will go elsewhere if this is what we are offering.

- 9.6. Members have also raised concerns regarding the partnership with Wiley that appears in Section 4.1.1.3 of the document: firstly, given that District Health Boards – the number one employer of nurses throughout the country – use Lippincott software, learners training at Massey's Wellington campus will likely find themselves disadvantaged as they enter the job market; secondly, as Wiley is an overseas company, there is little likelihood that their software integrates an explicit awareness of the Tiriti-related factors which are central to nursing practice in New Zealand.

- 9.7. Lastly, Wellington-based members have indicated that if an anchor campus is chosen for the Bachelor of Nursing, such an arrangement may have dire consequences for professional staff at the Wellington campus, and for the viability of the campus in general.

10. Additional concerns

- 10.1. Section 1.2.4 of the document states that the “impact of releasing a document of this level at the start of Semester One has been carefully considered” (6).
- 10.2. For many members, however, the timing of the release of the document is seen as intentionally designed to distract people away from the implications of the potential changes outlined in the document – members have described the timing as appalling, disrespectful, and lacking in empathy. Although it is recognised that there is no ideal time to release a document of this kind, doing so during the first week of the semester only exacerbated the pressures and stress that accompany one of the busiest times of the year for academic staff. As one member noted:

There is no good time to do this. That said, choosing the busy start of the semester has particular challenges in terms of staff attention and time, but also morale going into a new term. Beyond this, insufficient time has been given to Colleges to consult toward a discussion document. Worst of all, if the University knew something this significant was going to occur, they should have signaled it long ago so people didn't make important life decisions.

- 10.3. Indeed, members have reported a variety of adverse effects due to the discussion document being released during the first week of the semester:

The need to respond [to the discussion document] has come on top of an already heavy workload (I personally am working 7 days a week and expect to continue doing so at least until the mid-semester break). For students, it means a great deal of uncertainty; some responded by leaving [...]

A friend who works at UoA confirmed there had been enquiries from Massey students wishing to move. Myself and all my colleagues are stressed. Teaching material that is new for this semester is being delayed and pushed

out to students only just in time. Nobody is in the right frame of mind to teach exciting new courses.

This has caused overwhelming stress and anxiety. It has resulted in multiple medical appointments for myself due to underlying medical conditions that are triggered by stress. I have had to try and comfort students and colleagues that are in tears, including one colleague undergoing a panic attack.

- 10.4. The document is explicitly framed as a 'discussion document' – i.e. not a proposal for change – and notes that if the potential changes outlined in the document are to be advanced they will go through a proper proposal for change consultation process and would not come into effect until the beginning of 2021 at the earliest (19).
- 10.5. However, one of the primary issues that members have consistently raised is the fact that the process by which the discussion document was formulated involved no consultation with staff or students whatsoever. Despite the SLT's explicit framing as a 'discussion document,' many members feel this to be insincere; a type of faux-consultation that is desperately lacking in practices observing good faith. In other words, although staff and students are now being invited to provide feedback on the potential changes, the parameters within which they can contribute have already been tightly set.
- 10.6. Added to this, by releasing a 'discussion document' of this kind – that is, one that involves far-reaching potential consequences for staff and students – without first consulting those who will likely be affected, the SLT can be seen to be acting against the Tiriti-focused principles that ostensibly underpin Massey University:

One of the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi is that the Crown must act in the utmost good faith. This has not happened in these change documents. There was no attempt to involve staff prior to their distribution in identifying the key problems and best solutions. [...] All concerns seem to be brushed aside; so, this is not consistent with principles of partnership and participation.

The discussion document was damaging to our reputation as a University. While this was "just a discussion," it was not put together in a way that is consistent with our values as a University. I am hopeful that further

conversations will develop a better solution but the stress that this has put on our colleagues [...] has been a violation of the good faith relationship that we should have between colleagues at an institution of higher learning. I have been disappointed in the leadership. My undergraduate and postgraduate students have been needlessly distressed by the document and this has made me feel that Massey is a university that does not value its faculty, staff, and students.

- 10.7. On top of the lack of consultation that went into the formulation of the discussion document, the three-week window within which staff and students can provide feedback is seen by many as being too brief.
- 10.8. Given the gravity of the consequences for staff and students that will potentially be an outcome of the discussion document, a wider window of time is necessary in order to fully understand the document, ruminate and debate the contents therein, and actually put together a robust response. As such, the three-week turnaround time has only contributed to the stress, anxiety, and pressures that staff and students already face as the semester gets underway.

11. Conclusion

- 11.1. The TEU does not support the discussion document *A future academic plan for the College of Health*.
- 11.2. As expressed throughout this submission, our members have voiced strong concern regarding the lack of sufficient detail and information surrounding the rationale for the potential changes, as well as the potential changes themselves.
- 11.3. Added to this, of primary concern is the fact that the process by which the discussion document was formulated involved no consultation with staff or students, despite the seriousness of the potential consequences outlined therein. In all, these factors have left members stressed, disappointed, and uncertain about their future employment.
- 11.4. As mentioned, during a paid union meeting on Thursday 12 March, the following resolutions were passed:
 - 11.4.1. We reject the massively defective consultation process categorically on these discussion documents

- 11.4.2. We reject the displacement of face-to-face provision of teaching and learning by the online provision of teaching and learning
- 11.5. Following this, the TEU recommends that the discussion document and the potential changes outlined therein are shelved, and that the SLT restarts the consultation process in a way that enacts practices of good faith and honours academic freedom and workplace democracy. This means that the consultation process will involve consulting staff and students on the policies and strategies – i.e. the Digital Plus strategy and the No and Low Enrolments Policy and Procedures – that underlie the potential changes outlined in the discussion document.
- 11.6. We would like to request an in-person meeting in order to discuss these matters further.



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23 March 2020

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Background	5
3. Context and rationale for the potential changes	5
4. Digital Plus.....	6
Lack of information	6
Problems with increased online provision	6
Implications for Māori and Pasifika learners.....	7
No risk analysis	8
5. Optimisation of specialised infrastructure	8
6. No and Low Enrolments Policy and Procedures	9
Implemented to justify pre-determined “strategic shifts”	9
Lack of information	10
Lack of consultation – against University Statute.....	10
Potential breach of the Education Act 1989	11
7. College of Sciences’ financial environment	12
Insufficient and misleading financial data	13
Insufficient and misleading enrolments data	13
8. Potential changes for discussion.....	13
Unidentified consequences.....	14
9. Additional concerns	16
Timing of the release of the discussion document	16
Lack of consultation	17
Against academic freedom	18
Against wellbeing.....	18
Against Te Tiriti principles.....	19
Potential conflicts of interest.....	20
Insufficient timeline for feedback	20
Breach of good faith practice	21
10. Conclusion.....	22
Resolutions	22
Requests	22

Recommendations	22
11. References	23

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- 1.10. Members have identified serious issues regarding the processes by which the discussion document came about, including: the timing of the release of the document; the lack of consultation with staff and students as the document was being formulated; the notion that the parameters of the 'potential changes for discussion' have already been set; and, the insufficient amount of time allowed for providing feedback on the document.
- 1.11. Taken together, these factors have produced anxiety and uncertainty leading to undesirable impacts on the wellbeing of staff and their students; many of whom perceive the actions of the Senior Leadership Team as going against the very principles that ostensibly underlie the University's own ethics and regulations.

2. Background

- 2.1. On 24 February 2020, the Pro Vice Chancellor of Massey University's College of Sciences, Professor Ray Geor, released the Discussion Document *A future academic plan for the College of Sciences*.
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- 2.3. In short, the document outlines a situation that requires a number of potential changes if the CoS is to implement the University's wider "strategic shifts," including its Digital Plus strategy, as well as remain financially sustainable (3).

3. Context and rationale for the potential changes

- 3.1. With regard to the context and rationale for the potential changes, the document presents an overview of the situation faced by the CoS including internal factors such as the wider strategic direction of the University, as well as external factors such

as the financial environment within which the CoS is currently required to operate. Additionally, Section 3.0 of the document outlines an assessment of the financial performance of the CoS relevant to revenue and expenses; teaching, supervision, and research activities; and recent enrolment trends. A variety of options for addressing the CoS's financial underperformance are also briefly explored in Section 3.0.

- 3.2. More specifically, the internal factors linked to the future direction of the University involve a number of "strategic shifts" which are framed as having "important implications for the 'what,' 'where,' and 'how' of the CoS's teaching and learning activities" (5). These 'shifts' – developed by the University's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) – include:

- the Digital Plus strategic concept;
- the optimisation of specialised infrastructure; and,
- a newly implemented policy involving a set of procedures for monitoring courses which consistently have no or low enrolments.

4. Digital Plus

Lack of information

- 4.1. Many members have voiced frustration at the lack of clarity and detail surrounding what the implementation of the Digital Plus strategy will actually entail. As such, some members remain unsure as to whether it is something that they would support:

I have found the articulation of what the strategy actually is too vague to know whether I support it or not. I want to know exactly what "world class online teaching" looks like IN PRACTICAL TERMS and how it will be resourced within our university before signing up to this strategy.

Problems with increased online provision

- 4.2. Others have pointed out that digital education only works when implemented in moderation, and that if a greater degree of digitisation is to occur, such a strategy needs to consider lessons from the past:

[Digital Plus] places huge faith in technology as the vehicle for instruction. Digital Plus should be a tool that we use to support our students' learning but it must never become the dominant pedagogy. If it does then tutors and lecturers will become mere technicians whose job is to deliver a set and rigid curriculum. There is a lengthy history of trying similar initiatives in our educational past and all have failed.

[...] The digital policy is uninformed about education and draws on technological thinking that has to date in human history caused suffering and dislocation. It is a wrong turn.

- 4.3. Indeed, the nature of some subjects mean that they are not conducive to being taught solely via online provision; face-to-face learning is vital in many cases:

Not all disciplines can be taught properly via an online option. A number of disciplines such as nursing, psychology, and social work require personal contact to train [learners] to registration standards.

- 4.4. As recent research has shown, maintaining a mix of virtual and face-to-face learning is essential if the needs and preferences of Gen Z students are to be met (Selingo 2018).

Implications for Māori and Pasifika learners

- 4.5. Significantly, there is no consideration of the implications for certain groups of learners in relation to the implementation of Digital Plus. With regard to the TEU's third whāinga – "awhi atu, awhi mai," we take actions that seek to improve the lives of the most vulnerable – many members feel this to be a glaring oversight within the Digital Plus strategy:

We know from education-based research that Māori and Pasifika students perform better in face-to-face situations and thrive where cohorts are small and learning is more personal. A Digital Plus policy,

then, operates in direct opposition to the research-based evidence about what is best for Māori and Pasifika students.

- 4.6. As scholars have indicated, ensuring highly effective, culturally sensitive teacher-student relationships is crucial to the success of Māori and Pasifika learners, particularly at tertiary level (Hawk et al. 2002) as well as with regard to e-Learning and Virtual Learning Environments (Ministry of Education 2010).

No risk analysis

- 4.7. Furthermore, given the extent and implications of the potential changes tied to Digital Plus – including the associated potential job losses – members believe that the SLT has acted negligently by failing to include any type of cost or risk analysis as part of the rationale for the potential changes:

Theoretically, the Digital+ strategy may make sense; in practice it has major flaws and I think it will lead to a fall in student enrolments and experienced and talented staff choosing redundancy over relocating to a different city.

The problem here is the wording was vague about what an 'anchor campus' actually means. There are some programmes like Psychology which are strong at all three campuses so justify a presence there. There may be some others where a multi-campus presence should be reviewed. Another problem is that SLT seems to think that students will voluntarily go to another campus if they want to study a subject but I suspect we will lose many students because of this

5. Optimisation of specialised infrastructure

- 5.1. In conjunction with all subjects having a single anchor campus, the Digital Plus strategy intends to optimise the quality and use of specialised physical infrastructure by locating it at only one geographic or anchor campus site. The rationale here is that higher quality infrastructure is easier to maintain at a single site, and that greater teaching and research excellence will be facilitated by creating a "critical mass" of academic and technical staff at a single location (6).

- 5.2. Members see this aspect of the University's strategy as being unnecessary, misguided, overly ambitious given Massey's current IT infrastructure, and lacking in substantive support given the far-reaching potential implications for staff, students, and Massey's reputation:

Behind the marketing jargon, I have no real sense of exactly what 'Digital +' is supposed to encompass or be. Many of us are already teaching at least partly online and have been doing so for years. How will this be different? And if we are already doing this successfully from different campuses, why the need to spend a fortune to create 'anchor' campuses? [...] [T]hose of us who have been teaching online/digitally for years (including e.g. by video-link across campuses) know all too well that Massey's IT infrastructure is not up to the task of supporting current needs let alone this 'brave new world.' In my area, we are doing some very innovative digital pedagogy but have had to largely figure out the tech solutions and implement them ourselves, without help from IT.

6. No and Low Enrolments Policy and Procedures

- 6.1. The third "strategic shift" outlined in the document is a policy for identifying 'low enrolment' courses, specialisations, and qualifications. Developed and approved by the SLT, the policy stipulates a threshold criterion relevant to the EFTS of undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications and courses. The policy establishes a threshold for *monitoring* – as opposed to a threshold for *disestablishing* – courses and qualifications; the rationale being that it allows University managers to "make evidence-based decisions regarding the future of courses, specialisation[s] and qualifications not meeting these thresholds" (7).

Implemented to justify pre-determined "strategic shifts"

- 6.2. Members are unsure about the detail of the No and Low Enrolments Policy, its implications, and how and when it was devised. Given that the policy is dated as 'New February 2020,' many members hold the view that the policy was developed primarily as a way to justify the overarching Digital Plus strategy – in particular, the restructured campus differentiations.

Discontinuation of courses due to low enrolments needs to be considered on a case-by-case basis, not a blanket policy; and any policy must be the result of consultation with academics, not announced when complete by senior management.

Lack of information

- 6.3. Added to this, there is no information regarding how the numbers which constitute the thresholds were devised, and the policy lacks nuance and understanding regarding the function and necessity of some courses that tend to have low enrolments:

The devil is in the detail. Clearly, if a paper is consistently attracting very low enrolments it needs to be reviewed. There may, however, be a strategic justification for these papers, particularly if they are a pathway into postgraduate research.

There is a case to be made for looking at courses that don't attract students and asking if they should still be running or if they need to be updated or transformed. However, this should not be done simply 'by the numbers.' Courses with low numbers can be extremely important for many reasons and the decision to keep or retire a course or programme should be made on pedagogical and public good grounds, not based solely on EFTS and money.

Lack of consultation – against University Statute

- 6.4. The University's Council Statute on Policy Development and Review states that policies must, among other things, "consider the effect on staff," and "consider the effect on students."

- 6.5. Additionally, the Statute states:

Where policies have an impact on the terms and conditions of employment of staff, the designated policy owner will be required to consult appropriately, and as outlined in the relevant employment agreements, with all SLT members, staff, and staff representative

groups through the People and Organisational Development section, before seeking Vice-Chancellor approval. Similarly, where policies impact on other key stakeholders (e.g. students/lwi) the designated policy owner will be expected to consult with such stakeholders before seeking Council, Vice-Chancellor and/or Academic Board approval.

- 6.6. Given that the No and Low Enrolments Policy is categorised as 'Academic' policy, the fact that staff and students were not consulted during the development of the policy is seen by members as a breach of the University's own Statute.

Potential breach of the Education Act 1989

- 6.7. Taken together, members consider the above points to amount to a potential breach of **Section 182 Determination of policy, subsection (4)** of the Education Act 1989:

(1) In determining the policy of an institution with respect to any matter relating to the institution, the council of the institution shall consult with any board, committee, or other body established within the institution that has responsibility for giving advice in relation to, or for giving effect to, the policy of the institution with respect to that matter.

(2) The council of an institution shall establish an academic board consisting of the institution's chief executive, and members of the staff and students of the institution, to—

(a) advise the council on matters relating to courses of study or training, awards, and other academic matters; and

(b) exercise powers delegated to it by the council.

(3) The academic board shall be deemed for the purposes of section 222 to be a committee appointed by the council under section 193(2)(i).

(4) Without limiting the generality of subsection (1), the council of an institution shall not make any decision or statute in respect of any

academic matter referred to in subsection (2) unless it has requested the advice of the academic board and considered any advice given by the academic board.

(5) Without derogating from the duties of the council of an institution under subsections (1) and (4), a decision or statute made by the council is not invalid merely because of a failure of the council to comply with either of those subsections.

7. College of Sciences' financial environment

- 7.1. With regard to the financial environment of the CoS, the document states that budget forecasting indicates a deficit of approximately \$15.7M in 2020. The reasons given for the deficit – which significantly exceeds the \$3-5M deficit of previous years – include:
- a decline in government funding;
 - constraints on increasing domestic and international student fees;
 - 'flat' domestic student numbers;
 - an uncertain international student market due to, among other things, the impacts of COVID-19;
 - increased costs pertaining to "uncontrollable Central Overheads" (8); and,
 - the need to achieve the CoS's contribution to the Council-approved Massey University overall operating surplus (7-8).
- 7.2. In other words, the document presents a situation where the CoS's costs far outweigh its revenue.
- 7.3. Following this, the document considers, on one hand, a reduction in staffing and operational costs, and, on the other, an increase in EFTS revenue as both being insufficient strategies for addressing the CoS's financial underperformance.
- 7.4. Instead, the document advocates for a "substantial consolidation" (16) of the CoS academic offer which aligns with both the "strategic shifts" outlined above and operational factors pertaining to financial viability. Significantly, the move toward the

consolidation of subjects means that some specialisations may be changed or withdrawn (15-16).

Insufficient and misleading financial data

- 7.5. Members have identified serious issues with regard to the financial information included in the discussion document used to support the potential changes.
- 7.6. For example, it appears the expenditures associated with various Manawatū-based research centres are absent from the analysis; yet, the corresponding costs for Albany-based centres *are* included. It has been suggested that this inconsistency is intentional as it presents the margins of the Manawatū-based Schools within the College of Sciences as being better than they actually are.
- 7.7. Additionally, members are concerned that there appears to be no financial analysis, business plan, or market assessment conducted which supports the potential changes, nor is there any evidence that the College of Science will be benefitted if the changes are to be implemented.
- 7.8. It is also worth noting that as the situation with COVID-19 continues to unfold, the Tertiary Education Commission, as of 10 March, has announced that Tertiary Education Institutions are no longer required to return a 3% surplus.

Insufficient and misleading enrolments data

- 7.9. Members also consider the data pertaining to low enrolments in CoS course offerings (Section 3.3) as being insufficient and misleading as there is a lack of information regarding enrolments and population growth that is specific to the Albany campus and region.

8. Potential changes for discussion

- 8.1. Section 4.0 of the document outlines the 'potential changes for discussion,' including campus differentiation and the potential consequences of the campus differentiation for staff and students.

- 8.2. In general, the potential changes mean that the University's Auckland campus would operate as the anchor campus for computational and informational sciences, engineering, and construction, as well as accommodate the New Zealand Institute of Advanced Studies as a standalone, externally funded research centre focussed on the theoretical sciences.
- 8.3. Following this, the Manawatū campus would become the anchor campus for the physical and biological sciences, food technology, agriculture, animal science, and veterinary science, as well as the hub for existing and new facilities, research centres, and local and international partnerships with major food companies. The document also notes that the Manawatū campus will operate as the sole anchor campus for mathematics and statistics with activity in these subjects at Auckland ceasing entirely (16-18).
- 8.4. Further detail on the changes to specific qualifications and subjects is outlined in Section 4.2 of the document.

Unidentified consequences

- 8.5. There is insufficient consideration or detail as to what the potential consequences of campus differentiation for staff and students will entail – least of all any explicit mention of job cuts. As one member noted:

[...] Shifting staff and students between campuses is presented as a solution, but fails to acknowledge that staff have families, connections, mortgages, etc. at a given place... we cannot just uproot! Also, students might not have the chance or interest to move to another city... many live at home and do not have the means to move. Even if they are given the option (or rather, forced to) study online, there is NO EVIDENCE available to indicate that vulnerable students will be looked after. We have many students that suffer depression, anxiety, etc. (staff too), and the campus interactions are often the most significant interaction with a community [...]

- 8.6. Importantly, others highlighted the fact that consolidation and the associated potential job losses would have implications for the way in which many classes are delivered given that staff often operate in creative and collaborative ways:

[...] the reality is that, for instance, we have a mix of staff across campuses, actually working together to deliver both internal and extramural classes. To think that you can look from the outside and decide that this programme should be anchored here, and think you can get rid of the staff at the other campus ignores the fact that many of the staff at the 'non-anchor' campus are actually supporting delivery of teaching to students at this fictional 'anchor' campus and so to lose staff is to lose the capacity to deliver programmes at the anchor campus. It also ignores the different ways that students might be 'internal' or extramural and the pathways that individual students might take through their degrees that mean that we lose our pipeline of students because they can no longer come internally at the beginning of their degree because the 'anchor' campus is not close by.

[...] I am not convinced that the demand for distance that the university thinks is there in fact exists; nor that that apparent demand (in comparison to internal teaching) isn't merely the result of the extremely poor marketing of our internal offerings over the past years. My experience with experimenting with blended learning is that this is not a mode that internal students want or value, and I suspect that they will go elsewhere if this is what we are offering.

- 8.7. With regard to the potential consequences for students relevant to the changes, Section 4.1.3 outlines a range of support mechanisms and assistance options to ensure students are in a position to complete their qualifications, including relocation 'bursaries,' academic and administrative support for changing qualifications within Massey University, and liaison and administrative support for students who chose to transfer to a different university within New Zealand (18-19).
- 8.8. However, as members have noted, there are problematic assumptions inherent to the Digital Plus strategy regarding the retention of students:

Students who like internal offerings don't want to travel the large distances involved and will just go to other local universities. And just because students might do a mixture of modes in their programme (because of necessity) does not mean it is their preferred choice. Many students feel they do worse in distance mode and try to actively avoid it. Other overseas distance universities (e.g. Open University in the UK) still offer regional tutors (often on a one-on-one basis). There's no Digital Plus to this proposal, only Campus Minus.

The internal flaw in the Digital Plus proposal is the assumption that students will be happy travel to one campus or to take courses in distance mode. If this is not the case, then Digital Plus is nothing more than retrenchment under another name. There are many courses where distance offerings are not suitable, or present a much poorer educational experience to the student. Professional degrees such as engineering, technology, and vet science require regular face-to-face contact between, not just students and staff, but between students working in groups around a workbench to, say, build and commission equipment, products, or solutions. While improvements in delivery of courses using online tools is admirable, it should not be seen as a reason to reduce the offerings that the university provides. If the aim is to reduce the offerings, then it should not be dealt with under the umbrella of improving courses using online tools.

9. Additional concerns

Timing of the release of the discussion document

- 9.1. Section 1.2.5 of the document states that the "impact of releasing a document of this level at the start of Semester One has been carefully considered" (5).
- 9.2. For many members, however, the timing of the release of the document is seen as intentionally designed to distract people away from the implications of the potential changes outlined in the document – members have described the timing as appalling, disrespectful, and lacking in empathy. Although it is recognised that there is no ideal time to release a document of this kind, doing so during the first week of

the semester only exacerbated the pressures and stress that accompany one of the busiest times of the year for academic staff. As one member noted:

There is no good time to do this. That said, choosing the busy start of the semester has particular challenges in terms of staff attention and time, but also morale going into a new term. Beyond this, insufficient time has been given to Colleges to consult toward a discussion document. Worst of all, if the University knew something this significant was going to occur, they should have signalled it long ago so people didn't make important life decisions.

- 9.3. Indeed, members have reported a variety of adverse effects due to the discussion document being released during the first week of the semester:

The need to respond [to the discussion document] has come on top of an already heavy workload (I personally am working 7 days a week and expect to continue doing so at least until the mid-semester break). For students, it means a great deal of uncertainty; some responded by leaving [...]

A friend who works at UoA confirmed there had been enquiries from Massey students wishing to move. Myself and all my colleagues are stressed. Teaching material that is new for this semester is being delayed and pushed out to students only just in time. Nobody is in the right frame of mind to teach exciting new courses.

Lack of consultation

- 9.4. The document is explicitly framed as a 'discussion document' – i.e. not a proposal for change – and notes that if the potential changes outlined in the document are to be advanced they will go through a proper proposal for change consultation process and would not come into effect until the beginning of 2021 at the earliest (19).
- 9.5. However, one of the primary issues that members have consistently raised is the fact that the process by which the discussion document was formulated involved no consultation with staff or students.

- 9.6. Despite the SLT's explicit framing as a 'discussion document,' many members feel this to be insincere; a type of faux consultation that is desperately lacking in practices observing good faith.
- 9.7. In other words, although staff and students are now being invited to provide feedback on the potential changes, the parameters within which they can contribute have already been tightly set.
- 9.8. Many members have outlined what they consider to be a process of genuine consultation and co-creation:

Co-creation means that a pre-arranged end is not announced before the debate begins – rather, a number of possible strategies are put forward for discussion, together with an invitation for more.

Co-creation is not a one-size-fits-all process, nor is it a top-down, fiscally-driven one. Academics active as teachers and researchers must be involved in decision-making.

Against academic freedom

- 9.9. As such, many members consider the lack of consultation involved in the development of the potential changes outlined in the discussion document as being a possible breach of **Section 161 Academic freedom, subsections (2)(c) and (d)** of the Education Act 1989:

(2) For the purposes of this section, **academic freedom**, in relation to an institution, mean—

(c) the freedom of the institution and its staff to regulate the subject matter of courses taught at the institution:

(d) the freedom of the institution and its staff to teach and assess students in the manner they consider best promotes learning.

Against wellbeing

- 9.10. Members have pointed out that by failing to consult with staff and students as the discussion document was being formulated, undue stress and anxiety has been caused – an outcome which directly goes against the five strategic objectives outlined in the *Massey University Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2022*.

This has caused overwhelming stress and anxiety. It has resulted in multiple medical appointments for myself due to underlying medical conditions that are triggered by stress. I have had to try and comfort students and colleagues that are in tears, including one colleague undergoing a panic attack.

Against Te Tiriti principles

- 9.11. Added to this, by releasing a 'discussion document' of this kind – that is, one that involves far-reaching potential consequences for staff and students – without first consulting those who will likely be affected, the SLT can be seen to be acting against the Tiriti-focused principles that ostensibly underpin Massey University as outlined in its *Massey University Strategy 2018-2022* and the *Consolidated University Plan 2020-2022* documents:

One of the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi is that the Crown must act in the utmost good faith. This has not happened in these change documents. There was no attempt to involve staff prior to their distribution in identifying the key problems and best solutions. [...] All concerns seem to be brushed aside; so, this is not consistent with principles of partnership and participation.

The discussion document was damaging to our reputation as a University. While this was "just a discussion," it was not put together in a way that is consistent with our values as a University. I am hopeful that further conversations will develop a better solution but the stress that this has put on our colleagues [...] has been a violation of the good faith relationship that we should have between colleagues at an institution of higher learning. I have been disappointed in the leadership. My undergraduate and postgraduate students have been

needlessly distressed by the document and this has made me feel that Massey is a university that does not value its faculty, staff, and students.

Potential conflicts of interest

- 9.12. Members have highlighted the fact that those involved in formulating the discussion document are entirely based at Massey's Manawatū campus. As such, it has been suggested that the potential changes outlined in the discussion document may involve conflicts of interest on the part of the SLT.
- 9.13. Additionally, the lack of consultation and way in which the discussion document was released has caused many to speculate that part of the reason for the potential changes is to re-purpose the Innovation Complex currently being constructed on the Albany campus.

Insufficient timeline for feedback

- 9.14. On top of the lack of consultation that went into the formulation of the discussion document, the three-week window – since extended an additional week – within which staff and students have been required to provide feedback is seen by many as being too restrictive.

Given the sweeping and unprecedented nature of the changes, a much longer timeframe should have been provided, and feedback should remain open/ongoing throughout the process.

Far too short. It is so difficult to schedule meeting times with colleagues to discuss plans going forward as we are all teaching and have already committed any extra time to supporting postgrad students or other research activities [...]

Too short. A clear attempt to shock-and-awe, to stifle well-researched and reasoned responses. This is not consulting with employees in a fair and reasonable way.

- 9.15. Given the gravity of the consequences for staff and students that will potentially be an outcome of the discussion document, a wider window of time is necessary in

order to fully understand the document, ruminate and debate the contents therein, before putting forward a robust response. As such, the three-week turnaround time has only contributed to the stress, anxiety, and pressures that staff and students already face as the semester gets underway.

- 9.16. Additionally, in an email dated 10 March, the TEU wrote to Professor Goer requesting further information pertaining to the Digital Plus strategy, the No and Low Enrolments Policy, the CoS' financial information, the Innovation Complex, potential conflicts of interest within the SLT, and a recent Massey University staff survey – all information that is essential for putting forward a robust response to the discussion document.
- 9.17. However, the TEU did not receive a response to this request until 20 March – 3 days before the deadline for submissions. Most of the information requested was not included in Professor Geor's response.
- 9.18. This lack of transparency has prevented the TEU from providing a fully informed response to the discussion document.

Breach of good faith practice

- 9.19. Taken together, members consider the above points to amount to a potential breach of **Part 1 Section 4 Parties to employment relationship to deal with each other in good faith, subsection (1)** of the Employment Relations Act 2000:

(1) The parties to an employment relationship specified in subsection

(2)—

(a) must deal with each other in good faith; and

(b) without limiting paragraph (a), must not, whether directly or indirectly, do anything—

(i) to mislead or deceive each other; or

(ii) that is likely to mislead or deceive each other.

10. Conclusion

- 10.1. The TEU does not support the discussion document *A future academic plan for the College of Sciences*.
- 10.2. As expressed throughout this submission, our members have voiced strong concern regarding the lack of sufficient detail and information surrounding the rationale for the potential changes, as well as the potential changes themselves.
- 10.3. Added to this, of primary concern is that fact that the process by which the discussion document was formulated involved no consultation with staff or students, despite the seriousness of the potential consequences outlined therein. In all, these factors have left members stressed, disappointed, and uncertain about their future employment.

Resolutions

- 10.4. As mentioned, the following resolutions were passed during a paid union meeting on Thursday 12 March:
 - 10.4.1. We reject the massively defective consultation process categorically on these discussion documents.
 - 10.4.2. We reject the displacement of face-to-face provision of teaching and learning by the online provision of teaching and learning.

Requests

- 10.5. The TEU formally requests a copy of **all** feedback received by the CoS regarding the discussion document.
- 10.6. The TEU formally requests an in-person meeting in order to discuss these matters further.

Recommendations

- 10.7. In a letter dated 15 March, the TEU wrote to Vice-Chancellor Jan Thomas asking for the various Massey University discussion documents to be withdrawn due to the increased pressures and seriousness of the issues linked to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 10.8. Despite the TEU's request of a response by 17 March, there was no response until 18 March. In that response, the request to withdraw the documents was declined.
- 10.9. Given the nature of the views of our members as expressed throughout this submission – in conjunction with the undesirable consequences already experienced by staff and students throughout the CoS and the increased pressures due to ongoing developments surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic – the TEU, again, strongly recommends that the College of Sciences withdraws the discussion document *A future academic plan for the College of Sciences*.

11. References

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MASSEY UNIVERSITY'S 'DIGITAL PLUS' DISCUSSION DOCUMENTS

TEU Executive Summary

On 24 February, the Pro Vice Chancellor of Massey University's Colleges of Sciences released the discussion document *A future academic plan for the College of Sciences*. In the weeks following, similar discussion documents were circulated by the respective Pro Vice Chancellors of the University's College of Health (26 February), Business School (02 March), and College of Humanities and Social Sciences (16 March). The Pro Vice Chancellor of the College of Creative Arts has indicated that there is no intention to release a discussion document relating to her College.

The discussion documents outlined a "series of possible changes" to the various Colleges' academic portfolios; the rationales for the potential changes; and, the processes by which feedback was to be submitted.

Although the gravity of the potential changes varies across the Colleges, the underlying rationale hinges on the University's intent to implement a number of "strategic shifts" – including its Digital Plus strategy – whilst ensuring financial sustainability.

The discussion documents, if progressed, will lead to a restructuring of where and how subjects are taught, and to the development of change management documents that would result in the disestablishment of courses, as well as job losses.

Working together the TEU membership and staff have prepared responses to the discussion documents.

Together we have expressed strong concerns surrounding both the implications of the changes being proposed by the Senior Leadership Team, as well as, with the exception of the Massey Business School, the glaring lack of consultation that went in to the drafting of the discussion documents.

At a paid union meeting the following resolutions were passed:

1. We reject the massively defective consultation process categorically on these discussion documents.
2. We reject the displacement of face-to-face provision of teaching and learning by the online provision of teaching and learning.

This response is founded on

- the poor timing of the release of the documents (at the start of semester when staff and students are under extreme pressure);
- the ambiguous and misleading information contained in the discussion documents;
- the fact that the parameters of the 'potential changes for discussion' have already been set by two 'policies' which weren't debated by the staff of the university; and,
- the insufficient amount of time given for submitting robust feedback.

Added to this, the University's explicit resistance toward withdrawing the discussion documents in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to the anxiety and diminishing wellbeing of its own students and staff – a fact that has led many members to question the University's ethical integrity and willingness to operate in good faith.

For an institution that is ostensibly Tiriti-led and prides itself on its Wellbeing Strategy, the actions of Massey University's Senior Leadership Team are thoroughly unacceptable.

TEU cannot support the 'potential changes for discussion' put forward by the Senior Leadership Team and recommends that the Vice Chancellor, Professor Jan Thomas, immediately withdraw each of the College's respective discussion documents.