

## SAS "Realignment" Information Sheet

**Punchline: Peter March, the Executive Dean of New Brunswick's School of Arts and Sciences, has initiated what he calls a "realignment" of SAS departments' business administrators and support staff. Faculty and department administrators are alarmed that this realignment was designed and is now being implemented with no consultation of faculty or staff and little transparency. We are concerned that this plan will disrupt the autonomy of departments, undermine departments' culture, deprofessionalize our staff and increase faculty workloads.**

Peter March, Executive Dean of New Brunswick's SAS, and JoAnne Williams, the Vice Dean of Administration, designed and implemented a new reporting structure for SAS departmental support staff in an opaque manner, without consultation with faculty or support staff. Between April and August of 2017, department chairs and department administrators in the Social and Behavioral Sciences (SBS) grew increasingly alarmed and made multiple oral and written requests to SAS for clarification.

During this time, Dean March and JoAnne Williams would either deny that a reorganization was happening or say that whatever was to happen would be small and not noticeable. They also offered changing reasons for this "realignment" (or lack of change, depending on their response), including "rogue chairs," "excessive overtime" and "professionalization of staff." On August 3, 2017, JoAnne Williams met with Department Administrators in SBS and presented them with a cryptic PowerPoint (attached) that described a new reporting structure, in which Department Administrators would report to SAS with a solid line (or black line) and to Department Chairs with a dotted line (or scarlet line). Orally, she described additional changes that alarmed administrators, including the centralization of tasks.

Frustrated with the lack of information coming from SAS, we asked the faculty union to help circulate a [petition](#) on August 28th to all SAS faculty, which asked March to hold an emergency meeting with the SAS faculty in order to explain this new "realignment." According to SAS bylaws, the Executive Dean must hold a meeting if 10% of the faculty signs a petition. We reached this number within hours of distributing the petition. At this point, 224 of our faculty have signed, more would likely sign on if we continued to circulate it. (This happened in the last week of August, when most people are away!)

March has finally scheduled a meeting – on October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2-4pm, the same day that the Faculty Senate meets. In the meantime, JoAnne Williams is implementing this new arrangement quickly. SAS is already in the process of hiring the eight new administrators that they say are required for this new alignment.

But when the faculty raised concerns, Executive Dean March's [response was to "chill out."](#) Our concerns include the following:

1. What problem/s does this realignment seek to address? (Faculty are not convinced by the reasons put forth in Dean March's letter)
2. Would the proposed realignment address or exacerbate this problem? (The proposed realignment does not seem designed to fix the stated problems.)
3. What are the pragmatic implications of department administrators having two managers?
4. On one hand, Dean March says little will change, on the other, his letter (dated ?) states that Department Managers will be centralized much like our IT staff are organized, an unpopular arrangement. Which is it? Will support staff be centralized?
5. If support staff are centralized, this may disrupt the autonomy of departments, which we believe will dramatically undermine our departments' cultures.
6. Wouldn't this realignment create the same dramatically increased workload to chairs, undergrad and graduate directors that has already created problems in some Humanities and led one chair so far to leave RU?

SAS says that they are acting out of compassion for the support staff. We, too, feel compassion for our colleagues, but believe that any reorganization efforts must happen in consultation with them and their labor unions. Further, since a reorganization like this will certainly impinge on our own workloads therefore it must be done in consultation with the faculty Senate and the AAUP-AFT.

Academic life is not separable from our administrative duties. We believe that the Faculty Senate has to take a unified stand against these administrative incursions into the operation of our departments.