

WLUF ADVOCATE

Building community through dialogue, discussion, and debate.

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WHERE'S THE ACCOUNTABILITY?



This is the final WLUF Advocate response to the Administration's Layoffs and Open Letter, all of which have been written by, and express the positions agreed upon by, Communication Committee members. We encourage Members to [read the others on our website](#), and to send us your responses and thoughts to Larissa at lbrockle-bank@wlu.ca so we can post them on our [website](#).

Leaders of organizations are responsible for maintaining a corporate culture; leadership is a top-down affair. Those with management responsibility must articulate priorities and shape sensibilities. In Brown and Trevino's influential 2006 study "[Ethical Leadership](#)," they argue that good leaders model normative conduct through their actions and interpersonal relations. For them, it is about creating a responsible corporate culture. In order to prevent bad apples, organizations need to maintain good barrels.

And that, ultimately, is the danger in blaming others for the results of planning decisions that managers make. How can one maintain a work ethic in an organiza-

tion where the leadership refuses to acknowledge its responsibility? The President and Vice-President Finance need to reconsider the strategy they are currently pursuing. They have recently blamed rising costs on the pension crunch (we're all living too long) and the government crunch (they aren't giving us enough money) and the faculty salary crunch (we're all paid too much). They have blamed declining enrolments on the demographic crunch (too few babies) and the Arts crunch (no one today wants to study Arts). They have not suggested that

"Laurier's administration has made the decisions that have produced the current financial and enrolment situation."

any share of the blame should be assigned to poor decision-making.

But the reality is that Laurier's administration *has made* the decisions that have produced the current financial and enrolment situation. At least according to [the auditor for DBRS](#) (see pp. 110 – 119), it was their decision to acquire real estate which gave our institution the second highest Full-time Equivalent (FTE) debt burden among DBRS-rated universities. The University chose to accept salary increases in bargaining. That too was a decision that management made after assessing the benefits and costs of doing so. The University chose to promote itself in ways which, for many of us, made our marketing incoherent. It chose not to work aggressively on cultivating community or faculty and staff morale. It chose a particular international promotional strategy. It chose to invest in multiple

campuses. It launched the IPRM.

Those were all managerial decisions which were made by people paid substantial amounts to make decisions. Some of those decisions were good, some may turn out to be good at a later date, some have already been reversed, and some were, and remain, just plain bad. The point is: you shouldn't try to prove your competence simply by refusing to take responsibility for your failures. And if those failures are so great that the University is plunged into financial crisis, then the managers need to take responsibility for the decisions that placed us in that situation. A good corporate culture cannot be created in an environment where finger-pointing is the accepted response to crisis.

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