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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Athabasca University Faculty Association (AUFA), representing Athabasca University's academic faculty and professional staff, condemns the sudden firing of Athabasca University's President by the University's Board of Governors.

AUFA condemns the Board of Governors' callous firing "without cause" of the only president in years to openly defy the government, as we condemn the Board's lack of transparency in hiring a new president. "The Board's actions demonstrate a flagrant abuse of the search process and a disregard for collegial governance," says AUFA President Rhiannon Rutherford. Davina Bhandar, a faculty member and AUFA Constituency Representative, expressed concern that "the Board is not working in the best interests of the University but, instead, to further political gain for the governing party."

"In long service with AUFA, I've seen employer and government misbehaviour you wouldn't believe," says Prof. Mark A. McCutcheon, AUFA past president (2013-14), "but I've never things this chaotic, never seen a Board so ill equipped to support our mission and students, or such a leadership vacuum for the union to fill."

The UCP government's interference in a public institution's governance threatens institutional autonomy, disrupts and undermines continuity of governance, drains the confidence and morale of students and staff, wastes inordinate money and time, and has made the Board's composition less diverse.

From deep cuts to public universities' budgets, to interference in collective bargaining, to wholesale replacement of public board members, to this abrupt firing, AUFA reads the UCP's unprecedented interventions in higher education governance as evidence of the Advanced Education minister's political manoeuvring for a tight electoral race this spring.

The Alberta government's interference in a public higher educational institution undermines collegial governance and raises grave questions about appropriate procedure in Board decision-making; as the *Tyce* has reported, several Board members are on record saying they got no say in the Board's decision to install a new president.

AUFA condemns the Board's lack of transparency, callous disregard, and flagrant abuse of AU policy, procedure, and past practice, all of which are hurting students and causing disruption and demoralization across the University. The Board is not working in the best interests of Athabasca University.

If the UCP government is serious about supporting our University, AUFA urges it to fiscally support the institution in fixing the government-made mess at AU.

For more information, please contact AUFA via [AUFAhq@aufa.ca](mailto:AUFAhq@aufa.ca).