



## IT Optimization Comments

May 28, 2021

This was an unexpected and somewhat shocking career change with no advance warning or clear reason given. However, I am not angry at my new job.

Hard to say whether I am happy with my new job as I have yet to understand fully what I'll be doing. Nevertheless, I think the communication of the entire IT Optimization was poorly handled because specifics were never really offered, rather, just high level notions.

I still do not understand why some folks were not included in the plan either, i.e., some UR folks, Library folks, etc.

Several qualified and competent persons were demoted; heartbreaking. I don't understand what metrics were used to assess people's ability and contribution to the university.

I've spent 20 years doing development, and still have plenty of tools and libraries left to learn. I want to be a master of my trade, not someone who does one type of programming one day and DBA work the next. Management treats me like a widget. "You! Technical person! Come over here! I've got some technical sounding stuff I need you to do!"

I look forward to the opportunity to do something a little different, and is in line with some of the interests I identified in my IT Optimization questionnaire.

Having said that, the way this process was conducted over all was a significant source of negative stress and, at times, left me feeling quite demoralized, confused, and distressed. I understand these are extremely difficult decisions, and that this was a massive undertaking for those driving it. I even see the necessity of the process, and feel a deep sense of compassion for those who put work into it, because causing disruption to others' lives has to be hard to stomach.

It would have taken longer, but what would have made this better, in my opinion, would have been interviews with each staff member at the start of the process, with follow-up questionnaires. Getting to actually know the people who would be affected, instead of just reading words on a page, might have felt less depersonalized.



I understand that it was a "fill the boxes of roles" process that didn't consider the staff and what they can bring to the table in terms of their skills, knowledge and experience. Primarily, it appears that people weren't considered at all. I further believe that some of our staff are now placed in positions that set them up for failure and, by that very nature, set IT up for failure. There also appeared to be a cryptic process around the posted positions which made it difficult to understand or follow.

The forced "you will quit" mandate was extremely upsetting as you were left with no choice except take it or leave. I understand why this was put in place, but it was upsetting nevertheless and was handled quite coldly by the leaders. Personally, I was on the fence about accepting my new position or not and this was one of the factors (amongst others). Lastly, if we insist on putting people in people leadership positions, can AU train them? Looking good on paper does not equate to being good in that role. Its extremely hard to teach "soft skills" as opposed to tactical or hard skills required for the role. Perhaps prior people leadership experience and training should be factors when we promote people?

I feel like I came out on top at least in relative terms to what is going on. I do not agree with the job that I was offered but I am not unhappy about it. I am currently neutral. I do think there are other much more appropriate descriptions and titles that I have heard of any could be assigned to; I think the biggest problem is that many of descriptions are far too vague and classed wrong, therefore the job titles are being assigned to the incorrect people.



The fact that the union had to be the source of information on much of the information we got is totally unacceptable.

The arbitrary deadlines that were imposed were random and, although many people repeatedly asked for a time frame, initially none was provided and when it finally was it was only about 10 days of lead time.

Initially we were told that the managers would be hired and then we would be put into teams but instead we were not told of who the managers were until AFTER the deadline. Also we have been told that the directors had no say on what team a person went on. So the lowest level person that had input was deputy level and in the area I am in, the deputy has no idea what I do.

The fact that some managers were slotted into positions and so remain part of the union where as if the manager had to apply they had to become excluded staff is nothing more than obvious union busting.

Management doesn't appear to be planning ahead, or at least they are unwilling to communicate this. I do not know of anyone who was able to find out what squad(s) they would be on. They were also surprised by the fact that information wasn't be communicated down to embedded staff and their supervisors.

The number of grievances that this process has spawned shows that the university does NOT respect its employees and the contracts that they have signed.

This process, which could have been a positive move for the university, has left many disillusioned and demoralized. It is NOT a good time to be in IT at Athabasca University.

I am upset about the lack of professional dignity given to employees during this process. It is evident the only change management plan is 'might is right, do as I say'. AU has used the AUFA contract to complete this 'optimization' and is shocked when we display our discontent. This further shows how mgmt is out of touch with their staff.

The recent presentation by Universality Relations left me with whiplash when I compared it to how we are being treated by the university. I obviously don't know the ins-and-outs of everything to do with the new student service model, but I get the distinct impression that service employees were consulted (and will continue to be consulted during the process). Transparency was listed a priority for them! Why couldn't we have been given the same transparency? The IT optimization feels underhanded, devalues our work and our experience, and it's clear that there is another way to run this change (despite Jennifer's claims that we had to be secretive!).



There are still so many details that are yet to be determined, it is difficult to know:

1. if I will feel personal dignity at the workplace moving forward,
2. understand exactly which duties will move forward with me & which ones will not, &
3. if my concerns for the future will be properly addressed, as promised by IT & HR.

The communication provided throughout this process was confusing, as the details & plans seemed to change constantly. I don't know if IT had plan A & HR had plan B, or if both parties were unsure on how to move forward & picked plan X (which was in no way ideal for anyone); however, I do know that the IT optimization did not happen the way we were told it would & was in no way ideal for staff.

Shame on AU, I am totally disgusted with how I was treated. I also do not feel the union really did anything on my behalf really. I have paid dues for years to watch the fancy trips and meals enjoyed by our union reps at my expense. When I needed the union the most, I don't feel they really came through. It's not the unions fault. they were neutered by AU.

It's a completely new type of work and right now I can't say I'm "happy", but all factors considered (technology, workplace, pay rate, benefits) it is the job that suits me the best. Down the road it may turn out to be something I will enjoy as much as my old job.

As an embed IT resource in a faculty, I truly felt that the IT Optimization process was a disadvantage for me and others in the same scenario. Any of my colleagues who applied for the excluded positions were at a clear disadvantage because of the experience working on AWS core IT staff already had.



I don't know what I could possibly say except this has had to be the single most stressful thing I've ever endured in the (almost) 16 years that I have been with AU. The fact that there has been zero transparency with HR and IT between the staff directly affected by this, the countless unanswered questions, the lack of respect that HR and IT has for us. It all just baffles me. The fact that, had I known from the beginning that I was going to be an affected staff member, there were countless job opportunities that I have now missed out on applying for because I never thought I would be pushed out of my position in such a way.

To see our unit disbanded right in front of our eyes, the feeling of helplessness and sadness that we have NO idea where we are going to end up, whether or not we will continue to work together or if we will get to continue working together. It is simply put, heartbreaking. And what makes it even worse is that there are others in the University that do that exact same work as I yet they get to remain where they are, they weren't affected by the IT Optimization. This is complete and utter bullshit. It should be none or all that this happened to not just some.

On a positive, I am thankful that I finally get a job description that I am deserving of and a bump up the union ladder to be on an equal level as the others with the same job description as me. I, however, do not like that my job was essentially ripped away from me and was told either you buck up and accept the gracious position we are handing to you or there is the door.

In the end, all I can say is that I am so thankful for all the amazing support from AUFA. I honestly don't know how you guys all do it, and I know this is far from over, so thank you, thank you for all you guys do for us.

I am happy with my job description but what my job will really be, I have no idea. I don't know how the transition from my old and new job is going to work. We received contradictory statements from HR and IT management. HR was adamant that we were all going to start our new job on July 2 and dropped mindfulness for continuity pretty quickly. The hiring management skirted the issue successfully - we are starting the new job, but also not dropping balls, we might train other people to do our jobs, transition will be quick or it may be long, we will work together to figure it out. Jennifer assured us that the work in my original area in particular was going to continue until we can transition to the new system.

I also want to mention how profoundly disappointing it is that my current faculty's leadership is totally ignoring our redeployment of FB staff. Every one of us has worked for 20 years or longer in the faculty. So having met a lot of AU IT colleagues throughout this process, I am looking forward to transitioning completely to my new department.



I feel like I was demoted into a dead end job with no future and not related to anything I had been doing for AU, consequently I feel like I have been set up for failure after working my heart and soul out for AU. I know the unions hands were tied because of the process, but it is still very disappointing

My comments are that there really needed to be much more communication between the senior ITS staff and the rest of us 'underlings.' For myself, after the initial communique from HR about making my AUPE position redundant and giving me three options, offering two potential positions a buyout package, there was about 2 weeks of zero communication from HR even after I had indicated my preference for the AUFA role. Even after my requests to get additional information from HR about the process forward or a draft job offer, no follow-up emails or phone calls. I understand that there are several employees undergoing this same transition so I fully understand delays would happen. HR really needed to have more than 1 staff member looking at this.

When I did finally get a meeting with HR/IT and AUFA I felt that it was a productive meeting. I really wanted to have an offer in hand prior to so I could prepare some pointed questions. As such, it was only AFTER that meeting that I got a letter of offer from AU HR. I also only had 48 hours prior to the supposed deadline to have this process wrapped up. Being given less than 48 hours to fully review and discuss before requiring to sign and submit felt rushed and a bit wrong on a few levels. That said, the benefits are mostly equivocal from AUPE to AUFA with the exception of a few items as discussed with Dave and Richard during a completely separate meeting.

Overall, I feel I'm in a better spot. If it hadn't been for the willingness of Dave and Richard to meet with myself shortly after being made 'redundant,' I would probably still be wondering what it was that I just signed and what changes I can expect come 1 July.

Really, AUFA has really stepped up to support me in all of this. Dave and Richard, you two really deserve a heavy pat on the back - from me anyway.

Kevin in HR needed to have another 1 or 2 sets of hands helping with HR's side of this. Timely communications make all the difference when such uncertainty surrounds us.

ITS senior staff, other than the heads up at monthly team meetings, much more communication from your side would have been appreciated. If I hadn't had some forewarning that this process was happening, the 'congrats! you're redundant' email would have come as a serious shock. In a former job I had, our motto was "Communications is the backbone of Command." More and timely communications here would have been valuable.

It's obviously unsatisfying to see that management can ignore the contract, and that AUFA can do so little about it. Grieving is great but won't do anything to help the individual people that have been hurt by this.

That's not the fault of individual people on the AUFA executive who are volunteers, and have I'm sure been hard working and exhausted by this.



I think it's fair to say that management answered some high level questions but transparency has been lacking, and there is a huge disconnect between what is being said, done and understood at the various management levels. No dignity was present in most of their dealings with staff-it was a here's what your getting kind of no win scenario. If they had asked for feedback in a meaningful way earlier on, I think this process would have been a lot easier on all involved. As it is now, the new management positions all have an uphill battle because of bad blood in the orchestration of it.

Really appreciate the work AUFA did in getting me packaged out. Still a shabby exit after so many years with AU, though.

I really think that what IT did should not be allowed, none of us got jobs we applied for when we were hired.

I wish there would have been transparency into the decision process, but I understand the university's need for doing this process in the way they did.

Where we go one we go all.

Just kidding - and please don't quote me on that, ha.

This has been a stressful time for me. While my position sounds more or less the same I find the change somewhat unnerving. I don't know what to expect. There's talk of a couple of the systems that I help to maintain going away. Nothing stays the same, but I also wonder: will there will be work for me? That HR/AU thinks they can submit my resignation on my behalf... no.

I know coworkers who are seeing their jobs change drastically. They should have an equal say in the process. This is no doubt affecting them more than me. I stand in solidarity with AUFA and our allies.

Thanks y'all :)



While I appreciated the opportunity to have some input into the Optimization process via the Job Analysis Survey, it was disappointing that the opportunity for dialogue was not made available until after the job descriptions were created and assigned. I was also saddened by the demotions of several colleagues and by the surprising number of professional positions that were classified as excluded. As a member of AUFA, I am concerned about the precedent this sets for new positions in the future. The breakdown of honest communication and fair dealing from HR has also been disheartening.

For me personally, it's great to finally have a job description after nearly three years of working in a position without one. But it's too soon to say whether I will like my new job or not since UX is still a relatively new addition to IT (in the sense that there are specified UX positions), and it requires a skill set that I haven't really had much opportunity to use with all of the upheaval and project delays over the last couple of years.

There was no discussion from the management on my side to what was going to happen and the consequences. No answers from management at this end. This process was not very well thought out.

It would be nice if a time is not put in the certification especially for those that have to get the professional certification that requires at least 2 years experience we do not have.

I do not think that the process could have been handled worst. If all of AUFA sat around a table trying to figure out the worst possible way to proceed with an IT Optimization I still think it would have been a damn site better than this. The continuation of making IT positions (not just Directors/Mangers) excluded with no representation is also acting in bad faith and demoralizing.