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Just don't go

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To: [School faculty]

Dear colleagues,

Don't go to fake School Board meetings.

(1) The School Board has been established by the Senate and endowed with exactly zero rights and zero duties: it is an empty body.

(2) When we voted on decisions at the School Board in the past, the dean freely chose to ignore the decision. The dean falsified minutes. What's the point of wasting our time condoning gangsterism?

(3) Eventually, the "School Board meeting" simply became a dean's propaganda event. For example, to announce the HK\$15mio School of Humanities and Social Science "deficit." Fake deficit, fake sabbatical, fake tenure (dismissal at 4 month's notice, salary cuts), fake Senate, fake grievance procedures, fake pretty much everything. Why give face to lies?—The 15mio dollar lie, I wrote up, appended below.

Don't participate in cheating yourself.

Best,
Carsten

The HK\$15mio lie

Dean James Lee reported to the School of Humanities and Social Science (SHSS) School Board meeting on 31 January 2018 that the school has a HK\$15mio budget deficit. According to the minutes, "As per EVPP [Executive Vice-President and Provost] request, an action plan for repaying the budget deficit has been proposed." This action plan includes covering the "deficit in the academic salary budget" via attrition, increasing the teaching load to 175 students for regular faculty (vs. 150-175 for teaching-track faculty), and increasing the teaching load target of those who do not have "four research outputs for the RAE [Research Assessment Exercise] dry run in Feb 2018" to 500 students per year. (The full passage from the minutes is appended below.)

(1) There is no HK\$15mio budget deficit in SHSS. This is a fabrication of Provost Shyy Wei.

Without further explanation by the Dean, the supposed HK\$15mio debt appears to be by the SHSS to the Provost Shyy Wei. (It's not to a bank or to any other external creditor.)

Shyy Wei determines how individual schools' performance is being measured and how money is to be distributed. He changes the measurements and the distribution mechanisms at his own discretion. (His calculations are not public knowledge for faculty members.) He could tomorrow claim the HSS budget deficit is not 15mio but 150mio, or it's a surplus of 1,500mio, simply by again adjusting his measurement and distribution mechanisms (as he seems to do frequently).

The budget deficit idea is a simple way for Shyy Wei to terrorize faculty and still appear "rational."

(2) The salary budget cannot be in deficit.

Shyy Wei's rule is that the government's annual increase in HKUST's salary budget (equivalent to the civil servant's same-position annual across-the-board salary increase) is fully passed on to faculty, with Shyy Wei's twist that HKUST faculty are significantly less deserving than civil servants in that each faculty member receives only one-half the salary increase of civil servants, with the other half used by the Dean for redistribution. If the Dean distributed more salary increases than were available, then Dean James Lee violated Shyy Wei's rules and should pay for his violations, not the faculty who had no say in, and no information about how salary decisions are being made and how salary increases are being allocated. Shyy Wei and James Lee's solution is to penalize faculty for Provost Shyy Wei failure to supervise Dean James Lee (Shyy Wei failed in his job), and James Lee's violation of Shyy Wei's rules (where are the disciplinary measures against James Lee?).

(3) Requiring four research outputs or else imposing a 500 students' teaching load is nonsense.

(i) Shyy Wei and James Lee seem to view research output as a factory process. They seem to think they can force people to have consistently good ideas, to write them up despite all the obstacles that Shyy Wei and James Lee place in the way of research (that's another topic), and have this research published in timely and reliable fashion (where the publication process, and the length of time it takes, is beyond the control of the faculty).

One newly promoted Associate Professor had one publication in six years, which external reviewers saw as important enough to warrant substantiation (a permanent contract through age 65 at HKUST). Yet this colleague now has to teach 500 extra students per year. — I suspect he doesn't, since James Lee just certified him to be an excellent faculty member so that he was able to receive substantiation. So the 500 students teaching load is an arbitrary tool of terror wielded by the Dean, which will come with convenient, above-the-rules, private and non-transparent exceptions. At which point there are no rules, there is only the pretense of rules.

(ii) Faculty members have no influence on the number of students enrolled in their classes. SHSS does not have a program that requires thousands of students to take courses X, Y, and Z. SHSS doesn't even have the thousands of students needed to fill a dozen compulsory large classes. And yet the Dean chooses to penalize faculty members for student enrollment numbers that are the result of arrangements (course requirements for students) established by Shyy Wei and James Lee.

(iii) If only 15 students enroll in a faculty member's classes, then the Dean will have to assign 45 courses per year to this faculty member. At 3 hours of class time per class and 22 courses per teaching semester, this means 66 hours of pure teaching per week. This doesn't yet include office hours (say, one hour per class), and class preparation (at least as much as the actual teaching period). I.e., the faculty member will be working 154 hours per week (66+22+66). Hallo??

(5) Who is responsible?

The minutes state that "an action plan ... has been proposed" but omits to mention who it is that has proposed the action plan. ("Proposed," in minutes of the School Board meeting, in Dean double-speak, means "announced and will be enforced.") Those who terrorize do not take responsibility. And penalize faculty members for their (the hidden, responsible managers') failures.

(6) Budget deficit??

The passage states a budget deficit of HK\$15mio. A budget is for a period of time (not a point in time). So for which period in time is the budget of SHSS in a deficit of HK\$15mio? The fact that the minutes don't tell suggests that there is no period attached. So the HK\$15mio are not a budget deficit. What are they? (Other than a fictitious number that Shyy Wei pulls out of a hat.)

If it were a "budget" deficit of a non-specified period, then how will future budget deficits be avoided? The Dean is quiet on that account. While somehow paying Shyy Wei HK\$15mio, is SHSS incurring new annual debts of HK\$Xmio (figure X chosen arbitrarily by Shyy Wei) in 2018/19?

The very first step to dealing with a real budget deficit is complete transparency: Show the faculty members (who you want to penalize) what has gone wrong—lay open the budget data. It's a public university and not a gangster organization, so this should have happened all along. At a public university, the second step is to hold accountable those who are responsible for what has gone wrong: Shyy Wei and James Lee.

—The passage, as it stands, and the "proposal", make no sense whatsoever. I cannot help but question the mental sanity and the qualification to work in academia of Provost Shyy Wei and Dean James Lee.

Appendix:

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCE
Minutes of the First HSS School Board Meeting (2017-2018)
31 January 2018
[Item 3.1]

Dean Lee briefed members on the school response to the HK\$15mil budget deficit of the school budget. As per EVPP request, an action plan for repaying the budget deficit has been proposed with the following measures:

Selected attrition: in order to cover the deficit in the academic salary budget, some professorial positions will not be replaced after faculty retirement / departure.
Increase teaching load: based on the current budget formula, 40% of the allocated budget comes from teaching commitments of the School. For every 500+ students taught, a HK\$1mil budget would be downloaded to the School.
Generate recurring income from external channels: developing online GCS courses and licensing it to external partners with the aim to generate stable income for the School.

Dean Lee noted that relevant discussions have occurred at the Divisional level and that both Divisions proposed to resolve part of the budget deficit by increasing the teaching obligations of faculty. The proposed plan was to have regular faculty to teach 175 students per year, and teaching-track faculty to teach 150-175 students per semester. For research in-active faculty, i.e. those who could not produce four research outputs for the RAE dry run in Feb 2018, the target teaching load would be 500 students per year. Faculty members may consider to fulfil the teaching target by teaching the HUMA1000 Cultures & Values courses. Teaching of UG, PG and Common Core courses will be counted towards the quota. Subsequently, the School may release some teaching-track faculty for further savings on the budget.

Dean Lee reminded members that faculty could contribute to the University by conducting research or teaching activities; hence, such arrangements are not meant to be a penalizing act.

Prof Cameron Campbell supplemented that the RAE dry run would be held on 22-23 February and details would be sent to faculty via email.