

Dear Chair Medeiros and the Members of the Bristol Board of Trustees,

My name is Emily Brown and I am the newly elected President of the Bristol Community College Chapter of the MCCC union. I appreciate this opportunity to speak with you today.

First, I want you to know that it is our intention to request to be put on the agenda for every Board of Trustees' meeting. We feel it is important that we have the opportunity to maintain dialog directly with the Board about issues that concern our college. We are hopeful that the Board sees collaboration and dialog as a productive avenue to address several critical issues we face, together. The newly elected officers are embracing a team approach for our work and sincerely hope to collaborate productively with the Administration and the Board to solve problems in a fair manner that meets the best interests of all concerned.

Second, we are concerned that there has been no response from the Board of Trustees with respect to the letter from Paulette Howarth, dated February 25, 2020. While we understand the need to address issues like the move to distance learning, we feel that the retrenchment of college employees who were successfully working remotely in direct support of students is also an issue of critical importance. This has become even more pressing now for these employees and their families since the Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance has reported a large volume of fraudulent claims for Pandemic Unemployment Insurance, resulting in a significant delay of the legitimate claims. So, the lowest paid workers on campus, some of whom were laid off erroneously, are now not even receiving unemployment benefits in a timely manner. Much of this harm to employees, their families and our students could have been avoided with more collaboration and open dialog between top administration, supervisors and the workers themselves.

Third, many of the issues raised by the previous chapter President are still of concern to our members: the Vote of No Confidence in the Douglas Administration, the continued hiring of high paid consultants, low morale among faculty and staff, and fear of termination or other retribution. These are important issues, and ignoring them is not going to fix the problem. Additionally, the continued decline in the numbers of people employed at Bristol, more than 243 since 2017, has meant more work and pressure on remaining employees. This doesn't even take into account the disruption by multiple reorganizations and failed or delayed searches for key positions. The chapter wants to serve the students of Bristol Community College. This added workload, combined with the lack of open and honest communication, transparency, and legitimately shared governance, makes it increasingly difficult to do our jobs effectively and to support our students sufficiently.

We realize that the pandemic has introduced unprecedented challenges for the college administration. It has done the same for all of us — the faculty, staff, and students of this institution. None of us has faced this before and we are all in this together. So, it makes sense to have the benefit of all of our ideas and suggestions to make this work.

We truly want to be part of the solution. We can't do that if we aren't included in conversations and listened to respectfully. We endeavor to work to ensure that everyone is treated fairly, that decisions are made together, in the best interest of all. We hope that you will work with us to create a safe, constructive, and efficient environment for all of us who care deeply for this community, this college, and our colleagues.

Thank you.