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To: Dr. Jeff Hennessy and Dr. Ashlee Cunsolo

Re: Elimination of Herbarium Manager position, and dismissal of Alain Belliveau

I was shocked to learn that the leaders of Acadia University have chosen to lay off Alain Belliveau and eliminate the position of Herbarium Manager of the E.C. Smith Herbarium. I am writing to request that you reverse this decision and reinstate Mr. Belliveau in the position.

The E.C. Smith Herbarium has been a critical part of the Acadia University, and the Nova Scotia scientific community, for decades. It is the largest herbarium in Atlantic Canada, with over 200,000 specimens of preserved plants and fungi, and hundreds of frozen specimens in its seed bank. It was also the first Canadian herbarium to have digital scans of specimens published in a database. The specimens, seeds, scans, and data held by the herbarium represent the work of hundreds of professional and amateur collectors who have been contributing to our shared scientific understanding of Nova Scotia for over a century.

Herbaria and their managers are critical resources for scientists. Scientists use herbaria as sources of material for research on phylogenetics, evolution, biogeography, anatomy, climate change impacts, environmental contaminants, natural products and pharmaceuticals prospecting, and more! Herbarium managers facilitate this important work by arranging specimen loans, acquiring and preparing new specimens, monitoring the collection, repairing old specimens, updating and managing the specimen database, and publishing specimen data to improve accessibility and visibility. Without a manager, an herbarium cannot serve its purpose to the scientific community. Without a manager, an herbarium is at risk of falling into disrepair, turning a valuable scientific resource into a liability for the institution.

Herbaria and herbarium managers are also important resources for teaching and building community. In an herbarium, scientists and budding scientists (students) can see thousands of plant and fungal species under a single roof, with an expert to guide them in their study. No biology lab, lecture, or field trip can simulate this experience.

A herbarium manager can also engage dozens of volunteers to donate hundreds of hours of their time to assist with herbarium tasks, adding a huge amount of free (appreciated) labour to the creation and care of the herbarium collection. Without a manager, your student experience will suffer and Acadia University loses a source of skilled, unpaid labour.

Because of its deep connection to Acadia University, importance as a scientific resource, and its value for students, I ask that you reinstate the position of Herbarium Manager at the E.C. Smith Herbarium, and re-hire Alain Belliveau.

Sincerely,



Karen McKendry
Senior Wilderness Outreach Coordinator
Ecology Action Centre

(Cc'ed: Dr. Jeff Hooper and Dr. Allison Walker)

