MEMORANDUM

To:	PVP, Deans, Chairs, UWOFA President, USC President, SOGS President
From:	Janice Deakin, PhD
Date:	August 25, 2017
Re:	Response to concerns related to change in access to course material on OWL

I'm writing in response to concerns being raised by members of our community and reported in the student Gazette with regard to the recent change in access to course material archived on OWL — our online learning management system. A new automated process was initiated by Western Technology Services on August 9 to remove student access to course material stored on OWL older than Spring/Summer 2017.

First, I wish to clarify that the decision to initiate this process was not taken in response to the recent federal court decision in Access Copyright vs. York University. The rationale for the implementation of this automated process is explained later in this memo.

Second, I want to acknowledge that this initiative has, unfortunately, had some unintended consequences for some OWL users. We regret that the automated process was not preceded with any prior communication to advise it was happening. We recognize this has had negative implications for some members of our community — particularly students who have become accustomed to relying on OWL as an archive for old course materials — and we apologize for the concerns this has raised.

As a first step in addressing these concerns, Western Libraries staff will be available to assist students in accessing some course reading materials formerly archived on OWL; this can be done by contacting wlfeedback@uwo.ca I also want to assure community members who have been impacted by this process that we are working to address other pedagogical concerns and questions related to publishing and republishing course material to OWL.

As important context on why the automated process was implemented, we want to highlight that OWL is a tool that was originally designed to facilitate *active* course work and instruction; it was not conceived with the intention nor the technical capacity to serve as a platform for permanently storing archival course material. In fact, in the past, it was Western's practice to remove all course material from our online learning management system shortly after course completion. This practice served to address several important pedagogical considerations as well as matters related to copyright. However, in recent years, due to technical limitations in OWL, it was not functionally possible to institute this practice as an automated process.

To improve the efficiency and efficacy of the maintenance process — and to return Western to its practice of removing student access to materials on OWL shortly after course completion — WTS recently completed the development of the new automated process, as was implemented for the first time on August 9. This process also served to address ongoing student complaints regarding the need for simplifying student access to "current" course materials.

Going forward, this automated process will continue to be implemented shortly after final grades have been submitted following course completion.