

June 29, 2009

Dear Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost George W. Breslauer:

We write in response to the invitation to comment on President Yudof's draft options for furloughs and/or salary reductions. We are aware of the magnitude of the financial challenges confronting the University and are committed to working with the President to surmount them. We applaud his commitment to the principles of broad consultation and responding to the crisis in the most equitable manner possible.

However, we find ourselves unable to support any of the three presented options. We have not been provided with sufficient information, nor given adequate time for meaningful consultation with the Office of the President, the Berkeley administration, or our colleagues.

Informal discussions with colleagues have left us with many questions and concerns:

- **Compliance:** The Standing Order authorizing the President to implement a furlough/salary reduction plan in a state of financial emergency requires, among five conditions, that “other reductions of University expenditures through established University regulations and procedures are insufficient to stabilize the financial position,” and that “the contemplated actions are an essential element of financial savings under the current conditions.” In the absence of a full and transparent account of the budget and of all possible cost-cutting measures, how can we know whether these conditions have been met?
- **Duration:** Although the furloughs/salary reductions are proposed for a one-year term, they are subject to renewal by the Regents. By what process would a decision to extend these furloughs/salary reductions take place?
- **Equity:** We are concerned that the proposed cuts are not as progressively structured as they would have to be to realize the stated goal of equitability. Why are structures of multiple tiers, slowly graduated rises between tiers, and a threshold for total exemption from furloughs/salary reductions not considered? In light of the high cost of living in the Bay Area, and the fact that many employees are barely scraping by to pay their mortgage/rent, why should a cap on reductions for our highest earning employees come at the expense of a living wage for our lowest earning employees?
- **Other consequences of reduced compensation:** What are the implications of furloughs/salary reductions for our pensions and other benefits? The University's website says that “it may not be possible in all situations... to protect benefits and leave accruals... [T]his issue continues to be evaluated and no final decisions have been made yet.” In the absence of such information, how can we adjudicate the options?
- **Deferred compensation:** Are there alternatives that could be considered in lieu of

either furloughs or salary reductions? For example, could savings gained from a salary reduction be treated as an advance from employees whose lost earnings would be restored upon recovery of the economy?

- **Workload and tenure/promotions criteria:** Under the furlough proposal, how are teaching and administrative duties reduced to achieve a workload commensurate with reduced pay? Are tenure, promotion, and job performance criteria adjusted accordingly?

- **Recruitment/retention of faculty:** Academic careers are exceptional in that they typically involve enormous early financial sacrifice (for graduate students), early job insecurity (for junior faculty), and forfeiture of high salaries and easy mobility in exchange for job security (for senior faculty). Furloughs/salary reductions would undermine prospective faculty's confidence that terms of employment that are offered will be honored. How would this affect our future ability to recruit the best scholars from around the world?

- **Maintaining educational excellence:** Our dedication to teaching at Berkeley also depends upon its unmatched (and historical) combination of academic excellence, its diverse student population, and its tradition as a public university. The proposed furloughs/salary reductions are coupled with a raising of student fees, which endangers that tradition.

We are fully committed to our University and its mission, and we would like to participate meaningfully in decisions about the University's budget and explore alternatives that do not endanger faculty excellence and student access.

We realize that the roots of the budget crisis ultimately lie in precarious public support for public education and that, in the last instance, we are accountable to the residents of California. What is the University doing to persuade California taxpayers, legislators, and the media to support UC? Two bills currently before the California legislature—ACA 24 and SCA 21—would place before voters a constitutional amendment repealing UC's historic constitutional autonomy. What is the University doing in response to these bills? How might we move from a reactive stance to a pro-active strategy?

We need to respond to the current budget crisis in a way that respects and draws upon the good will of students, staff, faculty, donors, and alumnae. Their expertise, energy, and devotion to the University are its best resource.

Yours sincerely,

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