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DEPARTMENT OF NEUROLOGY  
DEVELOPMENTAL COGNITIVE NEUROIMAGING GROUP  
REED NEUROLOGICAL RESEARCH BUILDING  
DAVID GEFFEN SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AT UCLA  
710 WESTWOOD PLAZA, ROOM 3-242  
LOS ANGELES, CA 90095

June 29, 2009

Dear Chancellor Block and President Yudof,

I am writing this letter to express my strong opposition to the proposed 8% pay cut for all University of California employees. While I understand the motivation for attempting to spread the burden equally, in reality the proposed strategy is intrinsically inequitable. Foremost, it is already inequitable that some UC faculty have State support while others rely on soft money through hard-earned NIH funds. I have worked diligently for this university for the last 12 years, have brought considerable funds to this institution, and have never received a single dollar from the State. Given that I pay 100% of my own salary with NIH grants, it is not for my own salary that I am concerned, but rather, for the salaries of my talented and loyal research staff and students. My Developmental Cognitive Neuroimaging Laboratory supports 10 full-time individuals at all levels including postdoctoral fellows, Ph.D. students, undergraduate researchers and staff research associates. I also contribute salary support to numerous faculty collaborators across the UCLA campus. While salary cuts may alter the standard of living for State funded employees, the same salary cuts will potentially destroy the research programs of individuals who are not receiving support from the State. This will inevitably lead to a net loss of funds in indirect costs the University receives from my projects, a loss of talented staff and faculty and potentially towards increased unemployment.

I am an Associate Professor within the Department of Neurology at UCLA. Since my salary is not funded by the State, a large amount of effort is devoted to writing competitive research grants for which I rely heavily on research staff as well as the larger infrastructure of the Department of Neurology that provides administrative support through funds also almost exclusively obtained from federal sources. It is clear to me that salary cuts will most certainly result in the loss of talented and experienced individuals in my group since these people are those that will be able to obtain jobs elsewhere. This loss of staff, which seems imminent under the proposed plan, would make it impossible to secure and maintain federal funding and a high-level of future research productivity, particularly for faculty with no State support in early-mid stages of their academic careers. Under these circumstances, faculty such as myself will be forced to seek opportunities elsewhere when possible. In some cases the time lost training students and staff and the loss of incentive for enticing exceptional individuals to join particular research programs not reliant on any State funding, may ultimately extinguish research activities altogether and lead to the unemployment of both faculty and staff. Moreover, the loss of indirect costs associated with undermining the ability of non-State funded employees to bring in federal funds may lead to staff retrenchments on a broader scale not to mention diminish the reputation of our institution as a leader in science. The funneling of federal grant funds back into Departments will not help matters if federal grants are not obtained in the first place.

As Stated at the beginning of this letter, the system is not equitable to begin with and thus blanket salary cuts will not affect all UC employees equally. I am aware that there are several other important arguments for not imposing blanket salary cuts to all UC employees as a means to address the budget crisis. However, the intent of this letter is to draw your attention to this particular consequence of the proposed plan. I respectfully but strongly urge you to reconsider your position on this matter and to allow us to help solve this crisis in a more democratic forum.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth Sowell".

Elizabeth R. Sowell, Ph.D.  
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cc: Lubbe Levin, Associate Vice Chancellor, Campus Human Resources  
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