



protecting academic quality

April 20, 2009

Dear Colleagues,

During the budget crisis of the past eight months, United Academics has sought to remain true to four purposes: 1) striving to preserve and protect the jobs of faculty, 2) ensuring that the contract is honored, 3) ensuring that academic quality is protected and promoted, and 4) supporting others in our university community, both represented and nonrepresented. This has not been an easy challenge as we have worked hard to move the administration towards greater transparency and increased collaboration, while demonstrating to them that their proposed faculty and staff cuts are not as benign as they claim and would do harm to the academic quality of the institution and the nature of the student experience.

To get this message across, UA has collaborated with the Faculty Senate; Students Stand Up; UE; Students, Staff, and Faculty Together; and the emerging United Staff organization to change the direction of the university. Your Executive Council has been guided by input from the Delegates Assembly and individual members. The Executive Council authorized the public campaign committee which led many of UA's efforts: demonstrations, letter writing campaigns, lobbying members of the Board of Trustees, participation on forums, and publicizing our position through the media. In addition, UA leadership has had private meetings with President Fogel and worked closely with faculty in individual academic units who have been trying to influence decisions at their college/school level.

We have accomplished quite a bit.

- Pressured the administration to be more transparent and open than in any time in memory regarding the roots of this budget crisis and its rationales for the budget decisions made;
- Spoken strongly against the initial administration effort to move quickly on its "Transformational Change Process," contributing to President Fogel's decision to substantially slow any reorganization efforts;
- Brought to the surface unexamined and poorly constructed policies and practices, particularly as they relate to the faculty-staff ratio, resulting in the administration establishing a task force to review this metric;
- Exposed inappropriate payment practices related to bonuses, deferred payments and received a commitment from the administration to halt them;
- Called for salary reductions for the upper-level administration in light of proposed faculty and staff position cuts, which has contributed to the administration's establishment of a committee to investigate its policies on administrative compensation;
- Gathered data on the nature and impact of the proposed personnel cuts to build a case for retaining people, protecting academic efforts, and slowing pace at which decisions were

being made, which has contributed to administration decisions to "phase in" cuts and conduct a close examination of the impact of proposed cuts on academic quality;

- Brought to the fore questions related to the deterioration of academic quality and the nature of the student experience, despite administration assertion that student would not even notice the changes brought about by the budget cuts;
- Publicized the plight of departments suffering most egregiously under the proposed budget cuts, which contributed to a substantial increase in funding for the Nursing program and an administration commitment to review all proposed cuts in terms of their impact on academic programs. The President recently announced that a \$2.5 million Strategic Reinvestment Fund will be available to deans next month to protect academic quality;
- Sought to ensure that no one forgets that these statistics have human faces and cannot be dismissed.

Of course, there is still much work to be done.

UA has gathered and publicized considerable evidence that many personnel cuts were not strategic and threatened academic quality. We have also put a human face on these cuts, and shown how increased class sizes can damage the character of undergraduate experience and risk making the university less desirable to students. Nevertheless, the administration still seems wedded to its faculty-student ratio as the litmus test for economic efficiency (and academic quality?), although, as noted above, we are seeing some signs of administration recognition of concerns that their budget decision-making may well be having a negative effect on academic quality.

We need to continue to advance our concerns about academic quality and the nature of the student experience with the central administration and with the various deans. Reports from the legislature suggest that the administration will have more financial resources to draw upon than it had initially planned. We need to move the administration to reconsider some of their earlier decisions that lacked a strategic rationale and to slow the pace of the budget cuts. We will continue to work on all fronts to preserve positions targeted for elimination, reverse the personnel layoffs, and thereby protect academic quality.

Thanks to all who have joined in this effort.

UA Executive Council:

Linda Berlin
Beth Haggart
Stephanie Kaza
Peter-Jack Tkatch
Sara Solnick
Tom Streeter
Jackie Weinstock
David Shiman, President