

The undersigned Regents and Distinguished Professors are deeply disturbed by the current situation at our university. We all want to use our energy to do what we do best – generate and disseminate knowledge. The deep faculty rancor at the present moment reflects the fact that the current crisis is very much not of the faculty's making. Yet, adequately addressing it will require collaboration between leadership and the faculty.

Without good leadership the institution falters, without committed faculty the institution withers away. To re-establish good leadership and a committed faculty we must seize the opportunity to set things right. Doing so requires accepting a few basics points:

1. The key decisions that appear responsible for the financial crunch were taken with little or no input from faculty. Where input was sought (e.g., Ashford), often circumventing shared governance (as was stated later for legal reasons), it was mostly ignored. Given this, it is incorrect to assert that the presence of shared governance is somehow responsible for the crisis – one can more easily argue the opposite case. The consequential decisions are owned by UA leadership. UA and Board of Regents leaders should be publicly defending the shared governance rights of faculty against legislative mischief.
2. There must be meaningful transparency as we analyze the roots of the shortfall. This, at a minimum, entails a disaggregation of financial data by unit, and disclosure of mandated depletion of reserves. Overly aggressive tuition discounting had the indirect effect of devaluing SCH. When coupled with strategic initiatives that required the retention of additional revenue by the central administration, there was a direct hit on the bottom line of the academic units.
3. Cuts should preserve to the maximum extent possible what we are here to do – teach our students and generate new knowledge to benefit all. That means they must start, and disproportionately fall, at the administrative level, both centrally and in the Colleges. We are not in a position to offer specific solutions, but cuts to recently created budget lines that incur significant costs (e.g., Ashford) make more sense than cuts to long-term faculty and staff who built the University's core strengths.
4. Proposed changes must be justified in terms of cost-savings. For example, the centralization of IT, which already appears to be underway, is moving forward in the face of strong resistance by faculty, staff and granting agencies without any indication that doing so would save money.
5. While specific working and advisory groups will almost certainly be needed, these groups, including the recently created University Advisory Council, cannot replace elected governance groups, who must play a role in this process.
6. In this context, ad hominem attacks against faculty shared governance leaders are inappropriate. Faculty and staff distress is understandable, given the genesis of the crisis – as Gov. Hobbs points out their jobs are at stake.

While these statements speak to the administrative side of the equation, we recognize that faculty must work with leadership and the Board of Regents in a collaborative fashion to move forward. As such we urge that:

1. Faculty should act on the understanding that, just as we bring attention to legally mandated shared governance, the Board of Regents is legally empowered to oversee the 3 universities. We can fault its oversight, but this must be done in a manner that enhances dialogue. There is no alternative to working together.
2. Faculty should withhold blaming individual academic units for the crisis. With rare exceptions, most academic units are capable of generating revenue adequate to their needs – assuming that their efforts are appropriately rewarded (see above).
3. Just as we urge the Board to refrain from attacks on the faculty because of their distress at the situation, faculty should refrain from statements and accusations that can only serve to inflame and divide.

We exhort leadership, of both the institution and the faculty, to re-focus on solving our problems together. Solutions require at a minimum the buy-in of all sectors of the institution. That buy-in requires meaningful engagement as decisions are being crafted. The time is now, as choices are being made that will determine our academic future. We stand ready to help as administrative leadership and their faculty-elected partners get down to the serious business of collaboratively deciding what our future should look like. The University of Arizona has an outstanding reputation and we are committed to moving through this difficult period as effectively and rapidly as possible in order to refocus attention on the great work we do every day.

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