

***Senate Leadership Letter, Sign by Wednesday, September 3 at NOON.**

President Scholz, Provost Long and University of Oregon Board of Trustees,

We, the undersigned constituents of the Senate — career faculty, tenure-line faculty, Officers of Administration, classified staff and students -- are deeply concerned about the impact of prospective budget cuts on our curriculum, on our community, on the principle of shared governance, and on the university's credibility and sustainability as an R1 university. We ask the University Administration and the Board of Trustees to suspend these measures and allow for a more collaborative and transparent process.

The University of Oregon Senate derives its authority as enshrined in the University of Oregon's constitution. We represent the diverse stakeholders of the institution, and are charged with preserving the integrity of the academic mission in a manner that ensures continuing service of our mission to the State of Oregon.

In light of this responsibility, we must take issue with the threats to our academic mission embodied in reported plans for program closures and reductions through the firing of tenured teaching faculty, career faculty (now known as Teaching Professors), officers of administration, student workers and classified staff. We are told only that on September 8th faculty and staff will be notified of their firing and the community will be informed of "specific plans of action." This is an unacceptable violation of our shared governance responsibilities. Acting within this information vacuum we vigorously protest the details of the plan, as we understand them. This understanding is necessarily incomplete as it is based only on the details that have escaped the veil of secrecy through some mixture of official and unofficial channels.

If the plans, as understood, are executed, it will cause untold damage to our university and its students.

Our specific concerns include:

- **The timeline.** It has been stated that the timeline is not one of the Administration's choosing, and is not flexible. We reject this extremely short timeline, which is being used to push forward previously unthinkable changes to our University.

We call on the Board of Trustees to allow the university community an appropriate amount of time to support an intentional, transparent and strategic process where shared governance contributes to a future for all those that compose the university and its programs.

- **The damage to tenure.** The termination of tenured faculty will diminish the institution of tenure at our research university. The institution of tenure not only protects academic freedom but also assists in developing deep expertise in scholarly inquiry and excellence in teaching. Violation of tenure risks our standing as an R1 university and will damage our ability to recruit and retain world-class scholars.

We call on the administration and Board of Trustees to cease efforts to cancel contracts of tenured faculty without rigorous consultation and review. Before removing tenured faculty, the UO administration should openly review alternatives to employment termination in consultation with the faculty of units or programs that may face closure and provide opportunities for potentially impacted faculty to respond.

- **Performance Criteria.** Relatedly, there has been no effort to articulate any performance criteria that may be used to lay-off tenure-line or teaching professors. The processes for tenure and promotion are clearly articulated in each unit's tenure and promotion policies. A rigorous process of internal and/or external evaluation and review is conducted at the university before any faculty members are granted a promotion. However, no such deliberative and comprehensive process has been shared for the termination of tenure and/or teaching contracts. The result is that individuals who have been working to meet the expectations stated in their unit's policies may not be adequate in preventing a contract termination.

We call on Deans and the Office of the Provost to make clear the standards that will be used in employment terminations.

- **Impact on Teaching Professors.** It is not uncommon for teaching faculty to be the first positions eliminated with budget cuts. Yet, these faculty members are critical to the university and its students. Teaching faculty, often excellent instructors and mentors to both graduate and undergraduate students, are critical to our academic mission and student success.

We call on university leadership to ensure that teaching professors are not made more vulnerable, or take on a disproportionate burden, of any budget cuts.

- **Program closures.** The UO Senate and its committees have an important role in supporting the development of and updates to courses and programs. This process is rigorous, receives input from across campus, and sometimes requires approval

of the Higher Education Coordinating Committee (for new programs). The established review process evaluates the budget, staffing, faculty need and potential student interest of proposed new or changed programs. However, no similar process exists for the elimination of programs.

We call for an update to university policies that formally enshrines the role of the Senate in the sunsetting or cancellation of a program.

- **Impacts on Staff.** Our officers of administration, student employees, and classified staff are the glue that holds the university together, ensuring that our programs operate efficiently and in a timely manner. They advise students, provide mentorship and professional development for all members of the university community, assist in crafting and implementing academic policy, support research efforts, and provide direct services to students. In short, they provide the infrastructure for our academic mission. Yet, there has been no process shared with the university community on how specific positions may be eliminated, or the impact of those cuts on those that remain.

We call on the university administration to make clear the criteria and rationale for the elimination of staff positions, and their plan to ensure student and faculty success.

- **Impact on the student experience.** Faculty and staff cuts will be felt across campus, in our classrooms, in departmental advising offices, and in student services. No information on the way university leadership will mitigate these impacts has been shared with the university community, and student leaders at the UO have not been consulted. Planning to mitigate student impacts should include student leadership as well as students impacted by any proposed program closures.

We call on the university administration to engage in meaningful consultation with the UO student body, as represented by their elected Senate and President.

- **Opaqueness of the university budget.** Underscoring all of these concerns is a deep mistrust of the nature of the stated budget deficit and the need for cuts. While the University administration presents budget reports at quarterly meetings of the Board of Trustees, it is rare that other members of the university community have a

chance to review and comment on the budget, or are provided an opportunity to ask questions or seek clarity.

While the new Senate Budget Committee is an important first step, we call on the University's financial officers to present formally to the full Senate when requested to do so.

In short, we object to the corrosive effect that this plan will have on our students, our faculty and our staff at the University of Oregon. We call on University leadership to cease the current announced layoffs and engage in comprehensive collaboration across academic and administrative units before any budget cuts are finalized. The UO Senate, the UO Senate Leadership, students and other leadership groups on campus look forward to ongoing collaboration and consultation in our shared governance mission.

1. Dyana Mason, Associate Professor, Planning Public Policy and Management, UO Senate President.
2. Edward Davis, Associate Professor, Earth Sciences, Director of the Condon Fossil Collection of the UO Museum of Natural and Cultural History, UO Senate Vice President.
3. Prisilla Moreno, ASUO President