

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS

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September 1, 2009

Dear President Yudof,

Over the last week, every faculty member with whom I have spoken is dismayed about the decision to disallow scheduling of faculty furloughs on instructional days. This frustration was greatly compounded by the manner in which the decision was communicated. The faculty and the administration may disagree as to whether or not faculty should take some of their furloughs on days when classes are regularly scheduled. However, the plan put forward with a unanimous vote of the Academic Council was the result of extensive consultation on the campuses. Before and after the Academic Council adopted its position, faculty on the Davis campus were heavily engaged in discussions regarding the nature of the furlough options. At UC Davis, the overwhelming majority of faculty supported having furlough days balanced across expected faculty activities, including days of instruction. It now appears that their views and concerns regarding furloughs on days of instruction were simply dismissed. The decision to disallow furloughs on teaching days was based on no new information compounding our dismay. Faculty confidence in UC administrative leadership has been weakened.

Every faculty member with whom I have spoken in the last week believes that the newly adopted plan misrepresents the University of California. The opportunity presented by this "teachable moment" to remind our "public" (which includes students) that UC and its Academic Senate faculty have a three-prong mission--teaching, research, and service was missed. Our peer-reviewed promotion and tenure system does not say that teaching is our "paramount" mission. To do so clearly redefines our mission as being more similar to that of the California State University system rather than that of other Research I universities. Indeed, the distinction between a university and a college is the multi-faceted research mission of a university as

opposed to a “paramount” teaching mission. Faculty have asked that if the complexly intertwined research, teaching, and service jobs that our Senate faculty were hired--and often strenuously recruited--to perform is not acknowledged by our leadership at every juncture, then how can we have confidence that this message is being effectively communicated to the public, to our constituents and to our political leadership?

Most faculty are now starkly aware that we are experiencing the most serious erosion in the financial stability of the campuses in anyone’s lifetime. However, rightfully or not, they perceive a leadership that has not put forward a concrete plan to deal with non-competitive salaries, shrinking faculties and inadequate resources. All faculty with whom I have recently consulted agree that UC must look beyond the furloughs and recommit to fulfilling the promises of the Faculty Salary Plan. Consequently, at the first Academic Council meeting, I plan to ask Chair Henry Powell to put on the agenda a motion to support a range adjustment for faculty in the 2010-2011 academic year that is sufficient to move faculty salaries towards comparison eight levels.

Davis Division leaders also believe that the entire UC community must be engaged in a realistic discussion of the state of the University of California Retirement System. An enormous effort must be mounted to ensure that everyone understands the challenges facing the system especially as we approach the restart of contributions. I can anticipate a further erosion of confidence as mixed messages are received from different parts of the campus about those contributions. Yet we know that our contributions are not adequate. I plan to ask Chair Henry Powell to immediately take up this issue once again in September and ask the Office of the President to articulate its plans to stabilize UCRS.

We appreciate the dire economic situation the state and University are facing. However, establishing and following through with a plan to repair the Faculty Salary Scale and developing an achievable plan for restoration of the University of California Retirement System are necessary to avoid permanent degradation of the University of California. It would send the clear signal that faculty are not simply another constituency whose views are to be weighed against others. Rather, it will acknowledge that the reputation of the University of California derives from its outstanding faculty.

We look forward to working with the campus and your administration in achieving these and other goals as we work to maintain and increase the preeminence that UC enjoys.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. G. Powell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "P" and "W".

Robert Powell, Chair
Davis Division of the Academic Senate

c: Henry Powell, Chair Academic Council
Daniel Simmons, Vice-Chair Academic Council
Linda Katehi, UC Davis Chancellor
Enrique Lavernia, UC Davis Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor