

A CORRECTION: FROM SHARED GOVERNANCE TO COLLECTIVE ACTION

An Open Letter to UC Faculty

August 31, 2009

Dear Colleagues,

We are grateful for Provost Pitts' letter of 21 August—sent at the opening of a late summer weekend, with unimpeachably cowardly timing—for clarifying certain matters. Foremost among them is the farce of *shared governance*, in distinction to *emergency powers*. It is now finally inarguable that the polling of the faculty on significant matters is a fig leaf for the will of the Chancellors and the Office of the President. We stand corrected: shared governance is merely the polite name for emergency powers.

The implementation of the Regents' furlough plan—approved on the same day as the President's emergency powers—was presented to faculty as a process to be worked out at the discretion of each campus. On July 29, the Academic Council, representing the Academic Senates of all ten campuses, voted unanimously for systemwide implementation of at least six instruction-day furloughs over the academic year, with permission for campuses to have up to ten such days.

This recommendation—based on the expressly stated will of the faculty—was summarily rejected by the Chancellors and the Office of the President.

The reason for this unilateral decision is clear: the administration seeks to evade public accountability for the manner in which it has managed the budget crisis. It was the “optics” of the Senate Council's recommendation that were judged untenable. The Office of the President has failed to arrive at a plan that would protect the interests of both students and workers. It wishes to disguise the harm this failure has done to the University's mission. Or better: it seeks to shift the blame for this failure to the faculty, should we be so bold as to hold the President accountable to the consequences of his own plan. Toward this evasion, UCOP has flagrantly erased the difference between a furlough and a payout, presenting the latter in the guise of the former.

The ten Academic Senates unanimously mandated furloughs taken on instructional days for good reasons. These reasons exceed the particular interests of the faculty; they pertain to the collective interests of all workers and students. Instructional furloughs pressure the state to cease defunding the UC system, and they pressure the Office of the President to confront the fact that its overall approach to budget reform is unsustainable and unjust. UCOP seeks to alleviate that pressure by feigning the minimal impact of cuts upon the operations of the University and the education of its students. By doing so it makes clear its real interest: not to engage in a serious reevaluation of budgetary priorities, but to occlude the necessity of doing so.

The University's “paramount teaching mission,” we are told, justifies the imposition of furloughs on non-instructional days. But the President does not hesitate to fund the budget shortfall

through ballooning tuition payments and increased class sizes. The decision on furloughs does not serve to mitigate the effects of these policies; it serves to perpetuate them while dissimulating their effects. We cannot allow either the California legislature or the Office of the President to proceed as though cuts to public education do not have debilitating consequences.

We are told that the management of the cuts is a collective process. In fact it operates by autocratic fiat. We are told that the cuts are temporary measures. But we know we are in the midst of a long-term crisis. Each day that we continue to accept our role as bystanders to the administration's plan for remaking the University only helps to guarantee that the sequence of pay and enrollment cuts, layoffs, tuition and workload increases will continue. Thus far we have attempted to intervene by choosing among the options offered to us by the administration. The Office of the President has made it obvious that even such modest interventions will not be respected. We call for a decisive response.

If we find the President's disdain for collective decision making unacceptable, we must make it clear, collectively, that we will not accept it. If we hope to intervene in the process of decision making that will determine the future of the UC system, we must interrupt our exclusion from that process—now.

It has been made evident that we cannot intervene as governors; we are compelled to intervene as workers.

We call for a systemwide walkout of all UC faculty on September 24, 2009.

We call for the suspension of faculty teaching on this date pending three demands, which we understand as absolutely minimal:

1. No furloughs or paycuts on salaries below \$40,000.
2. The immediate institution of the Academic Senate Council's July 29 recommendation regarding the implementation of furloughs.
3. Full disclosure of the budget.

These demands are addressed immediately to the Regents' furlough plan and the Office of the President's edict concerning its implementation. However, despite their local character, these demands are made in solidarity with those of all UC workers and students. They cannot be used as a pretext for further layoffs or fee increases.

We, the undersigned, ask all faculty who support this collective action to send their name and affiliation to the following address: ucfacultywalkout@gmail.com

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