

December 10, 2008

Dear Members of the University Community,

Over the past month we have heard about the increasing financial challenges that we face as a nation, which affect the state of Washington, and the University of Washington. In late November, the State of Washington Office of Financial Management (OFM) announced a permanent budget reduction for the UW of \$16.8 million in our General Fund appropriation for this fiscal year (July 1, 2008-June 30, 2009), a 4.2% cut in our state budget. Although we will not know the extent of the additional reductions expected in our next biennial budget until after the legislative session is completed, we know that the cut will be substantial as the state's revenue situation worsens.

Uncertainty is always discomfoting. We are likely to face this uncertainty through the spring and possibly longer, as the legislature meets to decide on budget issues for the state. At present, we await the governor's budget proposal, which will be released in the middle of December. Both the Senate and House will propose budgets later in the legislative session.

In anticipation of these state budget proposals, we must make plans so that we have time to consider how to best preserve the core mission and values of the UW and to continue to invest strategically in areas that will be essential to our position in the decades to come. I have asked all deans, chancellors, vice provosts and vice presidents to assess their current expenditures and to propose ways that they can cut costs, while preserving our core vision in learning, discovery and engagement. We are considering how to cut expenses or avoid costs, to increase revenue, and to restructure some of our operations in order to achieve efficiencies. I have asked them to model changes that they must make if budget cuts are moderate or more severe. No one is exempt from budget cutting planning discussions. I have been consulting with members of my office to cut our budget as well.

I know that there is considerable concern about the ability of the UW to continue to be the preeminent public research university that it is and about our ability to continue to become an even better university during the years to come. I have heard from many of you about the uncertainties created by our smaller budget, about jobs, about our ability to recruit and retain faculty and staff, about how this will impact our current students, and about enrollment plans for both undergraduates and graduate students in the coming years.

During the next several months, I will consult widely to be certain that we get your advice. I have increased the frequency of meetings with several groups of faculty, staff, and students and will be communicating with you in as many ways as I can to insure that we consider all ideas. I will be working with the Senate Committee on Planning and Budgeting (SCPB), the University Budget Committee (UBC), the Board of Deans and Chancellors (BoDC), student leaders of the Associated Students of the UW (ASUW) and Graduate and Professional Student Senate (GPSS). The Office of Planning and Budgeting has a website where you can offer ideas:

<http://www.washington.edu/admin/pb/home/opb-bgtideas.htm>

I hope you will take advantage of this opportunity for input. In the end, the President and I must make the final decisions, but they will be based on consultations with faculty, staff and students across the whole university.

I will continue to communicate with you as we get more information on the current and biennial budget for the UW. In addition, we will be posting the latest information on the web. My website is:

<http://www.washington.edu/provost/>

Since I joined UW in 2005, I have been impressed repeatedly by the ingenuity, hard work and dedication of faculty, staff, and students. With your help, we can address the fiscal challenges we face and remain true to our vision of learning, discovery, and engagement.

Sincerely,
Phyllis M. Wise
Provost and Executive Vice President