

December 1, 2008

Dear Colleagues:

Most of you have learned that the UW faces severe budget cuts as the state attempts to balance its books during a recession, without raising taxes. I endorse President Emmert's words of encouragement: that we will come through this, and we should keep our eyes on the long-term welfare of the UW as we cope with the current crisis. But let us begin by acknowledging that not all of us may come through this period with jobs or careers intact; and many others in our state may face homelessness, destitution, or loss of hope for a better life. We are called upon to work together, therefore, to curtail the damage and achieve a fair distribution of its burdens.

To answer this challenge, we must inform ourselves, exert organized influence on decisions at the UW, and get serious about our role in public policy discussions.

Information. State revenues have declined dramatically during the current year, and a shortfall of over \$5 billion is projected for the coming biennium. In keeping with the governor's campaign promise not to raise taxes, proposals are now being considered to decrease state funding for higher education by 20% in the next biennium. When added to substantial cuts in the current fiscal year, the state's annual general fund contribution to the UW's annual operating budget may drop from \$400 million to \$300 million. The core annual educational budget also includes \$350 million in tuition, fees, and other designated operating funds; so the proposed decrease of \$100 million represents about 13% of the \$750 million budget passed by the legislature for this fiscal year. This amount is almost as large as the entire budget for the College of Arts and Sciences. If efforts to generate state revenue succeed, and the state economy stabilizes, we may be able to cut prospective losses in half.

To help us track policy developments in Olympia, our legislative representative, JW Harrington, has a blog: <http://legrep.blogspot.com>. Also, the UW Office of State Relations maintains a website: <http://www.washington.edu/about/staterel>. On local issues, Senate staff will establish a blog for the Senate leadership at <http://www.washington.edu/faculty/facsen>. (Incidentally, under "Issues Under Consideration" you will find some information about the UW athletic program.)

Organized Faculty Influence at UW. There are three primary routes for affecting the university's budget process: the Senate Committee on Planning and Budgeting (SCPB); the elected faculty councils in each school, college, and campus; and the senators who represent departments and academic units. These venues are empowered and directed by the Faculty Code, a code with the force of law in the State of Washington. We encourage faculty to use all these routes, and will deploy Senate resources to achieve an active flow of information across them.

The SCPB meets weekly with the Provost, budget officials, and other institutional representatives and engages in candid conversations on the options before us. For more information, see: http://www.washington.edu/faculty/facsen/planning_budgeting.html.

The elected faculty councils in the schools and colleges represent a critical avenue of influence that must be strengthened to cope with the choices we now face. The chairs of these councils are listed at http://www.washington.edu/faculty/scholcol/scholcol_sections.html. Within a few days, we should complete the task of adding the names of all elected council members to this website. In this crisis, we are encouraging faculty councils to work directly with deans and chancellors to review and rank budget options. Faculty and administrators share responsibility for ensuring that faculty representatives are enabled to make educated proposals, and learn what options are being considered, before the

opportunity to affect the outcome has passed. This route of influence is crucial because hard decisions about priorities among units will be worked through in meetings of the Board of Deans and Chancellors.

Finally, the Faculty Senate meets twice a quarter—and will schedule special meetings, if needed—and includes the President and Provost in discussions of the interests and values of faculty, across the university. Your senators will be most effective if there have been vigorous discussions in the departments. Unless we are creative, it's possible that a thousand or more of us will lose our jobs; and in referring to "us," I mean to include administrators, staff, and non-tenure-track faculty. While reasoning together about what may be sacrificed programmatically, we must also discuss how sacrifice should be distributed. Are there means, such as furloughs and other temporary reductions in compensation, to share the burden? What is our will, and what ways can be found to carry it out?

Public Policy. The Governor's budget may assume no new taxes, but this doesn't mean that the legislature won't face up to the need to generate additional revenue, recognizing that cutting \$5 billion from the state budget means directly putting tens of thousands of people out of work or on the streets, with further losses reverberating through our economy: not the best policy during a recession. It's likely, however, that any revenue increases passed by the legislature will have to be ratified by referendum. As citizens, as long as we're not using UW resources, we are entitled to engage in organized advocacy; you may begin by sending to jwharringtonjr@gmail.com your non-UW contact information.

One factor in the public discussion will be our ability to explain to policymakers and other citizens what the state will lose if our programs are slashed. There are, however, more interests than ours at stake. Our citizens need not only broader access to high quality college education, but child care that supports the development of children; transitional housing, education and employment for thousands leaving prison every year; mental health and drug addiction treatment; low-income housing; health care; subsistence for the poorest; and protection for the weakest. All of us who provide or benefit from public goods are endangered at this time, and we must work together to promote fiscal and social policies worthy of our shared aspirations.

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