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July 1, 2009

**Open Letter to CSU Faculty  
From the California Faculty Association Officers**

To all CSU Faculty Members,

Earlier this week, the Chancellor's Office released a press statement regarding discussions with CFA about a possible furlough program. We find the message in the release profoundly disrespectful, particularly given CFA's serious efforts to find ways to preserve classes for our students and jobs for our faculty.

Even more disturbing than the press release itself, the manner in which the Chancellor has dealt with this furlough issue — and indeed the entire CSU budget crisis — demonstrates a shocking lack of leadership.

We had hoped that in the course of discussing the Chancellor's proposal for a furlough program for faculty we would hear about his ideas for how to close the enormous CSU budget gap that has been projected for months. We knew — and communicated to administrative representatives — that faculty would demand details of the complete plan before voting on a furlough plan.

We have now met several times, and we do have some answers to some questions (many significant ones are not included in the Chancellor's press release). Nevertheless, we still have serious concerns in three main areas:

**1) The process for discussing furloughs and the CSU's proposal:**

In our discussions the Chancellor's representatives dismissed the sacrifices that faculty already made over the past few years of budget cuts. For example, across the system faculty workload has increased dramatically, and we have lost at least 1000 faculty this year alone. Moreover, we have already lost over 10% of our pay since the Chancellor has refused to honor even a fraction of the raises negotiated for last year and this coming year.

As we started these discussions, we expected genuine give-and-take with the Chancellor's representatives on the issue of furlough. Considering the sacrifices already made by faculty and other staff, it did not seem unreasonable for us to expect them to demonstrate explicitly that their furlough proposal was really part of a larger plan to achieve the stated goals of saving jobs and minimizing damage to quality of education.

Although we raised a broad range of concerns and asked many, many questions about the proposed furlough program — the majority fell into two areas:

*a) Workload concerns:*

As part of our discussions about the need for a reduction in faculty workload commensurate with the pay reduction proposed, we managed to convince administrative representatives that their original “Friday closure” furlough plan was poorly conceived and academically unworkable. We recommended instead that the choice of furlough days be left to each individual faculty member since he/she knew best which days would address both workload and educational goals.

The administration’s response to our proposal was at once patronizing and insulting.

They initially suggested that they could agree “in principle” to allow faculty to choose their furlough days; when pressed it emerged that they envisioned oversight of this “choice” by administrators who would vet the selected days for their “programmatically impact.” Given what we know from years of bargaining with the Chancellor, “in principle” agreements simply cannot be trusted.

*b) Job security concerns:*

An even more disturbing response, however, is the administration’s final and adamant refusal to guarantee that even one class or one job would be saved through the collective sacrifice of a faculty furlough program.

By the end of our conversations, they had repeatedly rejected even the most minimal of commitments around employment. For instance, they refused to guarantee that no tenure-track faculty would be laid off during 2009/2010 if faculty agree to a furlough.

Furthermore, they even refused to agree that long-term temporary faculty be given 45 days notice of layoff — a very minimal request in that the administration would still retain the “flexibility” they desire to “reduce the workforce.” Our proposal would simply allow people who have committed their professional careers to the CSU to have a courtesy notice of 45 days warning about impending unemployment.

The CSU administration, however, apparently prefers that these faculty members simply disappear.

**2) The overall CSU plan to close the budget gap.**

Faculty and staff who are being asked to give up a month of their annual salary to help the chancellor balance the CSU budget have a right to understand how the chancellor’s furlough program fits into a larger plan to handle the projected budget cuts to the CSU.

In response to repeated questions at every meeting, we have been told over and over, “The Chancellor has no plan” (other than a furlough program) to close the CSU budget gap. If true, this is simply amazing; we are left to wonder what precisely the high salaries the Board insists they must pay to attract the best “talent” has actually bought the CSU administration.

Without knowing what the rest of the plan is, a request for furlough is simply a request for a blank check drawn from CSU employees’ own accounts.

**3) The lack of CSU leadership throughout the entire CSU budget crisis**

In the discussions around furlough, the Chancellor has missed a real opportunity to pull the university community together in these perilous times. He could have been the kind of leader who makes people feel that genuine concern is coming from the top, that people are truly “sharing the pain,” and that the administration is willing to make some small concessions in its managerial discretion in exchange for significant faculty and staff sacrifice.

What he has stated about his “plan” at this point is not “shared pain” but a staggering failure of leadership. He has no plans, we have been told, to reduce the numbers of managers (but has threatened 9,000 faculty with loss of employment); he has no plans to reduce the \$1,000 per month car allowances or \$60,000 per year housing allowances for executives.

For the 8,500 faculty making less than \$50,000 in base pay (over a third of the faculty) who are wondering how they will make their car payments and how they will pay their rent with either a 10% pay cut or the total loss of work—the administration’s “plans” do not feel like “shared pain.”

It is clear in these discussions, as in their handling of the CSU budget crisis in general, that the administration is isolated from the lives of hundreds of thousands of faculty, staff, and students in the CSU.

It is a failure of leadership that has marked the entire budget debacle—a refusal to FIGHT FOR the system, the people in it and the people that it needs to serve.

Time after time what we have seen instead is their desire to “manage” the political status quo. The Chancellor and Board of Trustees have consistently adopted a strategy of appeasement — surrendering to the demands of Sacramento instead of fighting back. This kind of leadership has overseen the steady dismantling of the CSU with no action to stop it, no expressions of outrage at its institutional consequences, and with barely a whimper at the ultimate social cost.

This is the CSU management leadership we have — for the moment. Mercifully, it is not the institution’s only leadership. CFA will work with students and staff to continue — as it has for years — to fight for the CSU. We owe it to our students and our state. We will not let them down.

In Union,

The Officers of the California Faculty Association

*Note: We have scheduled a CFA Board of Directors meeting for Tuesday, July 7, after the Board of Trustees meeting. More details to follow in upcoming Headlines.*

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