



California Faculty Association

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December 9, 2005

Dr. Murray Galinson, Chair
Board of Trustees
California State University
401 Golden Shore, Suite 136
Long Beach, CA 90802

Dear Chair Galinson,

From a number of sources I have heard that at the Board of Trustees meeting on November 9, you expressed chagrin over my comments in the last California Faculty magazine. In that article I wrote to the effect that the California Faculty Association has found it necessary to take up the cause of advocating for the California State University because the Board of Trustees and the Office of the Chancellor have abdicated that responsibility.

I was unable to attend that board meeting because it was Election Day. Like hundreds of my faculty colleagues throughout California, I was participating in an effort to get citizens to the polls to vote in an ill-conceived, expensive special election that contained propositions which, if passed, would have been extremely detrimental to the CSU, its students and its employees. Fortunately for the CSU, CFA and our allies were able to defeat those who would have replaced the California dream with a vision of a corporate, non-inclusive state.

Had I been at the meeting, I would have been more than happy to explain and justify my position. I will do so herein by noting only a few of the recent actions—or inactions—by the Board and Chancellor's Office which underlie my contention.

First, during the two years following the handshake that sealed the so-called "compact" between the governor and the chancellor, neither the Trustees nor the Chancellor's Office has argued for additional funding. This has hurt the CSU because the deal was contingent upon a crushing reduction in funding for the CSU that totaled more than 20% of the general fund budget.

Even though the Board and the chancellor maintained that the "compact" was a floor, and even though the Board acknowledged that there was more than \$1 billion in unmet needs, the only voices to go to the State Capitol to argue publicly that the CSU needed additional resources were those of the CFA, other employees, and students.

In fact, representatives of the Chancellor's Office proclaimed that the funding as proposed by the governor was adequate for our crumbling public university. It was not difficult to conclude that the Board and the Administration were not interested in the fundamental crisis of the CSU.

Second, last year the governor announced that he intended to restructure the CalPERS retirement system for state employees. Virtually every member of the CSU faculty and staff felt threatened by this action. A secure and solvent defined-benefit program is among the most significant advantages available to CSU employees.

Neither the Chancellor's Office nor the CSU Board of Trustees supported the CSU faculty and staff in the face of this attack on our livelihoods. Unlike the elected and appointed leadership of other government entities, you who lead the CSU left it to CFA and other employee representatives to stand up for the more than 40,000 people who carry out the day-to-day functions of this institution.

Third, in regard to the recent special election mentioned above, the Board and the chancellor declined to take a position on any of the propositions on the ballot, including proposition 76. Even though a number of independent and non-partisan sources pointed out the potentially disastrous impact on public

education that would be wrought by proposition 76, the Board of Trustees and Chancellor's Office chose to remain "neutral." In effect, you supported the political agendas of some Board members over the best interest of the University. Once again, it was left to the faculty and staff to defend the University's interest.

Fourth, since the fall of 2002, the Board of Trustees, following recommendations of the Chancellor's Office, has increased undergraduate student fees (or "student taxes" as they are called by the student trustee) by almost \$1,100, or 77%. Still another increase of 8% based on the "compact" is approved to come into effect this July. That will bring the total increase in student fees to over 90% in less than five years. Moreover, the so-called plan to address the salary lags over the next five years envisions a scenario that would bring the cumulative fee increase to 179% in just eight years.

After all of these increases, you still have done nothing to study the impact of the fee increases on current and prospective students. You have no data to show that access and affordability are preserved. You persist in comparing with states that have never made the commitment to broad access to public higher education and that do not lay claim to an innovative economy and culture. You show no inclination to guarantee the promise of the master plan for higher education; rather your actions show you whittling down California's educational vision. Only CFA (and students) have argued that this is a burden students find increasingly difficult to bear.

Fifth, in all my years in the CSU, I have never witnessed an example of greater insensitivity than that demonstrated at the Board of Trustees meeting of October 28. On that day, my CFA colleagues and I implored the Board's Finance Committee to present a united front to state government officials to request adequate funds to rebuild the CSU; to provide resources to address the lack of tenure line faculty as identified in a plan adopted by the Chancellor's Office, the CFA, and the Academic Senate; and to recognize the crisis faced by our newest faculty and the difficulties the CSU faces in recruiting them. On the same day, students from throughout the CSU came to the Board to plead for respite from further tax increases levied on them, with compelling stories of the hardships they were experiencing.

Not only did the Board summarily ignore our presentations, but the next action taken was to increase executive salaries and benefits by more than the annual starting salaries of nearly all new employees to the CSU.

Representatives of faculty, staff, and students have been attending Board of Trustees meetings for years. Though our reception has been met with politeness, you have never been responsive. I recently pointed out that it was clear to me that the only voice heard in the Dumke Auditorium was that of the Administration; that you and your fellow Board members confuse that voice with the CSU underlies the problem. Like the Chancellor's Office, you treat those of us who do the work of the institution as adversaries.

I say here: the Board is not publicly representing the faculty, the staff, and the students of the California State University. The California Faculty Association will continue to lead the campaign to rebuild the CSU; to defend the University from attacks by those who place little value on public higher education; and to fulfill the promise made in the Master Plan for Higher Education nearly half-a-decade ago for an affordable, accessible, high quality education for all eligible Californians.

Indeed, along with other staff and student leaders, we truly have become the trustees of the CSU.

Sincerely,



John Travis, President
California Faculty Association

c: CSU Board of Trustees CSU Academic Senate, Executive Committee CSU Labor Council
CFA Board of Directors CFA Chapter Presidents CFA Lecturers' Council
CFA Staff