

# **UI ADMINISTRATION CAUSES UNNECESSARY CONFUSION AND ALARM**

By Bob Dickow\* and Nick Gier\*\*

The UI faculty union has been receiving a number of e-mails from faculty members who are deeply concerned about their positions. We believe that the UI administration has not been clear about its intentions and, as a result, it has caused unnecessary confusion and despair among its employees.

Provost Douglas Baker's program prioritization has caused the most concern. We have learned that small departments may be merged with larger ones. In 2003 the former liberal arts dean proposed a similar plan and got nowhere with it. Not only would it destroy faculty morale and unit integrity, but it would also be penny wise and pound foolish. Several department chair and secretarial salaries do not balance a \$147 million budget.

At a recent faculty union meeting, Jim Murphy, chair of the UI Budget Committee, presented figures concerning the current financial crisis. It was his opinion that there was no budgetary reason to cut any faculty positions at all.

Following the Governor's orders, the UI has held back 4 percent of its budget and has placed another 2 percent in reserve. There is about \$96 million in the FY09 General Account, so 6 percent of that amount is \$5.7 million. The UI will save \$6 million by not filling vacant positions. About \$1.8 million must be put aside for staffing necessary classes, so that leaves \$4.2 million to cover the budget shortfall.

It has been suggested that a 3.8 percent increase in student fees would take care of the remaining \$1.5 million, but it is time to call a halt to making the students pay for a poor economy and a stingy Legislature that has reduced, over thirty years, its higher education outlays from 20 percent of the UI's total budget to 12 percent.

When Interim President Daley-Laursen was asked if every program, including athletics, was on the table for consideration, he answered in the affirmative. The UI Press was shut down because it was losing money, but the non-academic athletic program receives a \$726,500 subsidy from the Legislature. Furthermore, while all other UI units pay an annual 8 percent administrative fee to the central administration, the athletic department pays only 3 percent.

The faculty union proposes that UI athletics start paying its fair share, and for FY09 that would amount to \$654,314. (The department claims that it would amount to only \$300,000.) During a budget exercise under President White, a faculty committee recommended that UI athletics undergo a \$300,000 reduction, but White ignored the request while cutting other programs.

Now is the time for non-academic programs to play the major role in making up the remaining \$1.5 million. For example, UI's top administrative salaries have, since 1982, outstripped full professors 260 percent to 187 percent. The Consumer Price Index for that period was 210.

A faculty member recently calculated the percentage increase in the number of employees in three administrative units from 2003 to 2008. The first went up 125 percent; the second, 46 percent; and the third, 146 percent. No academic department has enjoyed such growth.

Far too many outside consultants have been hired over the years. A San Francisco attorney earned a cool \$250,000 to write a report that white-washed problems at the Parma Research Station. The \$130,383 Yardley Report was not only a waste of money but an insult to UI faculty. Just this fall an expensive consultant was called in to mediate a dispute that the UI administration itself should have handled.

When the UI declared financial exigency in 1981, the union garnered over \$1 million in compensation for 8 of the 11 tenured faculty who were laid off. Because of the union's action, the 1982 emergency resulted in only one tenured professor losing his job.

President Daly-Laursen and Provost Baker have assured us that they will not declare financial exigency. Good for them. They have no financial grounds to do so anyway, at least for FY09. Nevertheless, the faculty union stands ready to help any UI employee who might be impacted by program reductions or realignments.

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