

December 14, 2010

Dr. Elson Floyd
President
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Washington State University
Pullman, WA 99164-1048

Dr. Warwick Bayly
Provost and Executive Vice President
PO Box 641046
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Dear President Floyd and Provost Bayly:

The WSU-AAUP chapter has paid close attention to the current budget cut planning process and has been engaged in associated discussions regarding vision, process, and shared governance. We want to convey to you our concerns regarding the budget cutting process. Some of these concerns relate as well to the operation of the university at large.

The responsibility of the faculty is the university curriculum, as is standard practice in universities across the nation. Since many of the budget cut plan elements will impact curriculum, the faculty should have had a wide representation and approval power on the plan and on the final rendition of it. This faculty power should be in place whether the issue in question is attributes of specific courses or policies on establishment, reorganization, and discontinuance of programs, departments, colleges, and larger programs of study.

Planning meetings regarding budgets should be public meetings to the extent of the law, and confidentiality requirements of members of any planning committees should not be made except in the cases demanded by law. 'Closed meetings' and broad requirements for confidentiality from committee members stand in the way of shared governance. Information dispersion to faculty and representation from a wide range of faculty voices should be standard practice. On all committees whose decisions potentially affect contingent (non-tenure line) faculty members, contingent faculty should be full members of those bodies in a percentage reflective of their percentage of the university faculty.

In the current round, after a semester of planning and a month after deans' plans were due, the administration announced its budget plan on Dec. 3 and held a public forum on Dec. 8 on the plan. The administration required, however, that the university community respond to the plan by Dec. 15, only a week and a half after the announcement. Coincidentally, the final plan is also scheduled to be announced on Dec. 15. How is it possible that university community responses will be seriously considered when they can be offered until the same date of the final announcement? This confluence of dates makes more obvious perhaps the overall message of this short response time – that faculty, staff, and student responses were never going to be taken

into account in the 'final' plan. Likewise, announcing a plan and calling for responses at the end of the semester when faculty and students are deep in preparing, taking, and grading final exams and then departing from campus, is not at all conducive to a real consideration of any plan and well-developed responses. This end-of-semester/vacation timing is a repetitive pattern for major announcements by the administration, even when not driven by state information releases. Announcements of plans need to occur during a regular semester, not at the end of a semester/over break; more lag time is needed between the announcement and the response deadline; and the responses of the university community need to be seriously considered by the administration.

Throughout this round of budget cut planning, ambiguous terms have led to confusion and anxiety in the university community. There has been administrative talk of 'everything is on the table' when, in fact, the entire community understands that some programs are more at risk than others. Terms such as 'reorganization', 'realignment', and 'restructuring' have all been used by various levels of administration, but these terms are not clearly or consistently defined, so the university community is left to wonder and worry.

In the case of 'reorganizations' of programs (whatever that may be), WSU has no clear policy on what processes and conditions will be used to make decisions regarding tenure track and contingent faculty positions. Faculty as a whole should be defining these processes, including negotiation on moving positions, job responsibilities, retention of resources assigned to faculty, and potential rehiring in the case of terminations.

We urge that you delay the decision and announcement date for the final plan for cuts until the end of January to allow time for more input from the university community and serious administrative consideration of the responses. We ask that in any future deliberations regarding budget reductions, realignments, restructuring, or reorganizations, attention be paid to the requirements of shared governance and transparency. We urge that the university to operate within the nationally- recognized guidelines in the AAUP Redbook (<http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/policydocs/default.htm>).

Sincerely,

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