



June 8, 2020

Board of Regents, University of California

Dear Regents,

We, the undersigned members of the Staff Assembly Executive Board at the University of California, Riverside (UCR), write to you today to remind you of our campus' unique staffing and budgeting situation and to ask that you carefully take these factors into account while planning the upcoming budget cuts resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Even before the pandemic, UCR has struggled with a history of underfunding, which has led to chronic understaffing. This cannot be blamed on any one individual president, chancellor, or group of Regents, but is the result of 50 years of decisions that have consistently put our university and its underserved region at a disadvantage. Our chancellor, Kim Wilcox, has addressed this need for rebenching with many of you, and it is important that it continue to be considered as we move forward during this crisis.

Last year, an analysis conducted by campus leadership showed that UCR has approximately 760 fewer staff compared to its sister campuses when you analyze the staff-to-student ratio. Despite this, our campus has accomplished amazing things, including becoming the Number 1 university in the U.S. for social mobility, one of the Top 30 public institutions contributing to the public good, and the country's most transformative public university. Staff played a role in every single one of these accomplishments, as well as dozens more, that we tout as an institution.

Yet, our staff is in a delicate state. According to the 2019 CUCSA/UCOP Staff Engagement Survey, approximately 95% of our policy-covered staff say they believe in the teaching, research, and public service mission of the University of California. However, almost half of survey respondents stated that they were seriously considering leaving the UC system.

Our staffing issue will be further complicated by the fact that so many of our colleagues are choosing to retire. Their expertise and institutional knowledge would be hard to replace in the best of times, but looming budget cuts and hiring freezes will make it almost impossible, and once again our underserved students and community are likely to suffer.

We accept that times like these call for shared sacrifice. However, when the May 18, 2020 letter from the President tells us that ladder-rank faculty will continue to receive scheduled increases because they need to be retained, it feels insincere. Because policy-covered staff, who currently constitute more than half of UCR's staff population, are not covered by any bargaining agreement, they become the population most vulnerable to cuts when budgets are reduced. It becomes almost automatic to use policy-covered staff as a lever for savings and sends the message that staff aren't as critical to the mission of the campus as faculty or students. Of course, that is false.

True shared sacrifice means that everyone gives a little so that no one has to give all. Thus, we ask President Napolitano, the Regents and the Legislature to consider this on both the statewide and local levels.

- Cuts to the campuses should not be unilateral and should take past funding discrepancies into account. UCR is unable to shoulder cuts to our staff or our programs that other campuses may be able to absorb more easily. Recognizing that UCR has been historically underfunded and addressing that fact now, during this crisis, is making an investment in the future of the people of the Inland Empire in Southern California.
- UCR's service to underserved communities must be supported so that our successes can continue.
- We ask that any pay decreases be tied to furloughs rather than involuntary across the board pay cuts. Across the board pay cuts will prove disruptive to staff members' financial wellbeing and adversely impact their long-term pay, including retirement.
- On the local level, we call on faculty to be subject to the same restrictions on merit increases as policy-covered staff. While this does increase the risk that some faculty may be recruited to other institutions, this is superseded by the need for all personnel to rise to this unprecedented challenge.
- We encourage out-of-the-box thinking when considering ways to address potential administrative salary reductions including, but not limited to, the idea that administrators take only their faculty salary for a year to help offset potential cuts.

The faculty, staff and students of UCR have accomplished great things together, and the campus simply cannot function if one of the legs of the stool is allowed to deteriorate. Much of what makes the campus compassionate, vibrant, and amazing is due to work done behind the scenes by extraordinarily committed staff who have already been pushed to their limits due to historic underfunding.

We are extremely dedicated and love our campus community, but we can only be so resilient. We must maintain enough funding to cover the current staff positions; it might stop the attrition long enough for us to continue being a beacon of hope and dedication to our underserved Inland Empire community, pushing forward our strength of diversity and social mobility rankings amongst many others as we emerge from the other side of this global pandemic.

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to receiving your written response to our concerns.

Sincerely,

UCR Staff Assembly Executive Board

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Cc: University of California President Janet Napolitano, UCR Campus Administration, UCR Academic Senate