



June 2, 2020

To: Michael Schill, President
Patrick Phillips, Provost
Missy Matella, Associate General Counsel
Chris Sinclair, United Academics President
Mike Urbancic, United Academics VP for Non-Tenure Track Faculty Affairs

cc: Juan-Carlos Molleda, SOJC Dean

We offer this in the spirit of wanting our University to be healthy and whole.

We come to you as full professors leading two of the most successful programs on campus, the 800+ student SOJC advertising major and the professional Master's in Advertising and Brand Responsibility, now entering a thriving third year even under these unprecedented circumstances. The programs produce successful graduates who will be prominent members of global society, innovators in business, and supportive alum. They also fill sizable tuition coffers for the university. With our leadership, these programs bring in substantial donor support and partnerships, fueled by industry professionals who want to be a part of the unique culture of the SOJC and the vision we bring. Together, we two professors have decades of investment in the University of Oregon and the SOJC.

In building the ethic and mission of the Master's in Brand Responsibility over the last few years, we emphasize that brands and the people who shepherd those institutions in society – that is, all of us and each of you, in the case of UO – must be authentic, courageous, and dedicated to social good, both externally and internally. The actions of our university about Career faculty contracts meet none of these standards at this time.

Beyond disappointing, this is simply deplorable.

Our country's flaws and failures in this chapter bring into sharp focus the broken systems around us. Here at the University of Oregon, we are witness to this unfair treatment of Career faculty. We ask that all of you listed here work to fix this unfairness now.

The last few years have been devastating for Career faculty on our campus. Now, the ongoing negotiations around their contracts have ravaged the community we all worked to build. Our Career faculty colleagues have been diminished by the attitude of administration and the ongoing negotiations on both sides which ultimately fail to recognize Career faculty value. (To our point, those programs noted above do not work without these faculty members.) This week we learned that several Career faculty members who are in mid-contract were notified last week that their reward for achieving promotion would be a new contract with a .55 FTE. Apparently, they had the choice of continuing with a 1.0 that did not recognize their well-earned promotions.



Beyond deplorable, this is unethical.

We find both “sides” of this negotiation lacking in courage. At this moment, all university leadership have the challenge, opportunity, and mandate to nurture our community for the benefit of all. This is not being done. Especially at this sad and emotionally charged time in our national discourse, you all should be working beyond obligation to bring us together. Simply, you should do the right thing.

Given the lack of transparency in any budget discussions, it seems you’ve taken a scatter shot approach to “fixing” budget issues. At this juncture, much of that fix rests on the shoulders of one faculty classification. Other universities have found much smarter ways to address budget shortfalls such as operational and travel budget savings, or through furloughs and payroll reduction across the board. Our colleagues at other schools share stories of true collaboration and empathy for all members of their communities. Here, we get messages that “we’re all in this together” but see little action in that regard.

Rather than building shared sacrifice and true community investment so needed at this time, all of you have pointed fingers, blamed each other, and acted helpless or heartless in the face of our adversity. You let people be demoralized and diminished because of the process of “sides” and the use of institution speak at every turn.

Rather than acting with courage and empathy to support people, each of you have found scapegoats for our problems. No one stands up to act as listener and leader, finding new ways to solve these challenges.

Instead, some of you have said Career faculty are failed academics – which shows a stunning ignorance of the work of your own faculty – and therefore they are unworthy. Some of you have declared to units that “you are not special” when we try to explain the expertise and importance to successful programs and the profession that our Career faculty bring. Some of you have let the notion of “sides” and negotiation overshadow the reality that this is about people who have given so much to the university. Some of you have simply forgotten what is at stake.

All Career faculty – valued members who contribute to our culture, our student experience, and our research agendas -- should be awarded their full contracts. The fiscal problems we face should not rest on them; rather, those burdens should be shared across all faculty.

Our recommendations are simple. Put your faculty – all of them – first. They delivered the impossible over the last term and will continue to do so. To that end, we ask that you:



- Be generous and visionary leaders that work to solve these problems for people who need you to be fair and just. If ever there was a need for empathetic leadership in the history of the university, it is now.
- Build a new innovative solution to the deficit. Forge shared sacrifice and lift our community. If ever there was need to model empathy and inclusion, it is now.
- Stop pitting TTF against Career faculty, faculty against administrators, and the union against Johnson Hall. If ever there was a time to tell a true story that we gathered to become a better community in a time of crisis, it is now.
- Listen. Listen some more. Talk to people outside of the filter bubbles that you have created. Understand who each of us are, what we are afraid of, and what we share. If ever there was a time for this generosity of spirit, it is now.

We realize the great challenges we face. As tenured faculty members and leaders in our school, we know we hold privilege. We want that privilege to be used to address this issue so important to the success of the SOJC and the health of our university. We ask that all of you put posturing aside and find the humanity to treat everyone in our UO community fairly.

Respectfully,

Deb Morrison, PhD
Carolyn Chambers Distinguished Professor of Advertising
SOJC Director of Advertising

Kim Sheehan, PhD
Professor
Director, SOJC Master's in Brand Responsibility

Sent via email 06.02.2020