

Dear colleagues,

A few months ago we stood on opposite sides of the lectern, presenting opposing views to the Senate on the pros and cons of faculty unionization. We haven't changed our views on those differences, but today we stand together, and we ask our colleagues to stand with us in addressing some of the basic challenges facing our campus.

In the end, the issue isn't unionization: it's how best to make progress on solving these issues. Some think unionization is part of that solution; others do not. But the two of us agree that whatever is done must be done together to face the large budgetary, legislative, and institutional challenges confronting us. We want to change the focus to what we agree about, and what can be done about working on these shared concerns within existing governance structures and relationships.

To this end, we want to see the conversation move from a divisive debate to a problem-solving orientation. We ask our Senate colleagues for support and we call upon the Senate leadership and campus administration to work with us in making progress on these matters.

We believe that the most important issues of concern to faculty campus-wide include the following:

1. Addressing salary disparities between faculty on this campus and at peer institutions, and addressing salary inequities that may exist within this campus.
2. Working with the other campuses of the University of Illinois and other universities across the state to protect faculty pension and health care programs and to promote new policies to put these programs on a sustainable financial footing.
3. Identifying and resolving any unfair practices in the tenure review process, and balancing appropriate faculty and administrative roles in that process.
4. Reviewing our family leave practices, and benchmarking our policies against those of peer institutions.
5. Developing consistent policies for budget review at all levels of campus, from departments up to the campus and university levels, which ensure that statutory faculty rights are part of the budgetary process and protected at each of those levels.

6. Ensuring that the desire to make the campus responsive to new opportunities does not come at the expense of transparency, appropriate consultation and review by authorized governance bodies, and careful deliberation about the merits of those initiatives.

7. Guaranteeing that during any process of academic program and financial re-evaluation, which may involve program reductions, there is no short-circuiting of due process or the rights of faculty.

8. Developing a realistic plan to address deferred maintenance issues on the campus over the next several years, including long overdue classroom, laboratory, and office renovations.

9. Protecting, and perhaps expanding, the tuition waiver guarantees to faculty, which remains a crucial benefit.

10. Maintaining a tone of mutual respect between faculty and administration at all levels of the campus, and seeking to ensure that the processes of shared governance are fully implemented at each of those levels.

We recognize the realities of difficult budgets and uncertain state funding, and none of these issues can be solved overnight. But we invite our faculty colleagues, Senate leadership, and administrative leaders to join us in a shared focus on pragmatic problem-solving.

We hope that we can begin a discussion now and through the summer that seeks concrete strategies for addressing the issues recounted here. We leave it to Senate leadership and the Executive Committee to define a process for doing so. We expect that by Fall this process will result in a public report that lays out specific plans for moving forward on each of these concerns.

We all want a better campus for ourselves, our staff colleagues, and our students. Let's focus together on how to do that.

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