President Royce Engstrom  
University Hall  
Missoula, MT 59801

Dear President Engstrom:

Thank you for granting Staff Senate the opportunity to be involved in the dialogue regarding the budget impacts on campus. We appreciate your collaborative approach to working with shared governance.

Upon review of the staff comments collected after the budget forum, we find an underlying uncertain and apprehensive tone. Many comments cite unanswered questions and lack of clear and sufficient data. Although many individual staff members legitimately fear job loss which fuels speculation, the majority accepts the current situation and has therefore provided constructive and tangible suggestions. We are continually impressed by UM staff members’ knowledge of the front lines, student needs, and campus priorities. Staff is motivated to make positive change and improve University of Montana processes and systems in order to create a more dynamic and student-focused environment.

We have categorized the information into five main areas: Recruitment, Cost savings, Academics, Strategic approaches to layoffs and alternative ideas, and General feedback. Three particularly prominent sectors that concern staff are the Mansfield Library, Career Services, and Foreign Student and Scholar Services. We have condensed and summarized the most salient points below. We look forward to visiting with you at our meeting next week regarding these issues, answer any questions you might have, and brainstorm ideas for a shared vision to move UM forward.

**Recruitment**
- Provide better outreach to high schools in Missoula
- Improve relationships with local high schools and build better programs on campus for local high school students
- Clarify a more tangible and accessible scholarship structure for prospective students and make it more visible in recruitment and admission materials
- Guarantee a scholarship amount in admission letters
- Offer specific scholarships to Missoula County high school graduates
- Encourage community and business people to help recruit
- Create a plan for recruitment that shows how all units take part in recruitment

**Cost savings**
- Are the Cost Savings Committee results/findings being effectively implemented?
• Allow departments to decide how to cut salaries or implement other cost-saving measures
• Ask for volunteer FTE reductions (full-time electing to continue working part-time)
• Cut medical benefits for part-time employees
• Eliminate paper waste for forms that could easily be electronic
• Outsource UM Dining
• Do not eliminate the Motor Pool; sectors that utilize the motor pool often will end up spending more money on transportation costs and lack of access to transportation will compromise programming options

Academics
• Develop more online programs
• Develop program for MRI, ultrasound, nuclear med, etc., that is not offered elsewhere in MT
• Develop relationship with Community Hospital and Western Montana Clinic so more health practicums are available
• Enforce a greater concentration on teaching within the 3-tiered CBA system (teaching, service, and research) so that more tenured and tenure-track faculty are teaching more classes/sections/students as we downsize and neglect to fill open faculty lines
• Offer more evening classes to accommodate nontraditional students
• President Engstrom noted that the ideal staff to faculty ratio is 1.4:1. What is the ideal ratio for contract professional staff to faculty? What is the ideal ratio for staff to student?
• Contract professionals who are underperforming should be the first employees cut
• Some staff also teach and fulfill both a faculty and a staff role
• Increase the number of Physical Therapy students

Strategic approaches to layoffs and alternative ideas
• Furloughs are an effective way to save costs, even just two weeks of furlough days would make an impact
• Implement mandatory furlough days for highest paid employees and middle management employees in proportion with their salaries; employees making less than 150% of the poverty level should be exempt from taking furlough days
• Freeze raises and bonuses for administrators
• Cut administrative salaries and put that money toward more student scholarships
• Buy out employees who wish to retire early
• Offer early retirement paying $5000 per 5 years worked; require retirees to buy MUS health insurance
• EEO/Title IX should provide oversight for layoffs to ensure that minorities and women are not disproportionately disadvantaged
• Provide career services to laid-off employees

General feedback
• Set goals and be transparent as we move forward
• Create a shared vision for the future
• President Engstrom should stay the course and stay strong
• Improve customer service for both internal and external customers
• Implement a hiring freeze rather than implementing layoffs
• Stop creating new administrative jobs
• Distribute workloads more evenly and across sectors
• Advertise UM more effectively

**Mansfield Library**

• A strain already exists on staffing
• The library’s mission is closely tied to student retention and performance
• If research is a priority, cutting library resources is contrary to UM being a research institution

**Career Services**

• Combine Career Services with Office for Student Success
• Business students rely heavily on Career Services; they will suffer if positions are cut
• Cross-train career counselors with academic advising or vice-versa to make employees more effective and save money

**Foreign Student and Scholar Services (FSSS)**

• FSSS fulfills very different role than International Programs
• International students benefit from the structure of FSSS under Student Affairs
• Delay FSSS movement into Academic Affairs until after the new VP for Student Affairs and Enrollment is hired; allow that individual to evaluate whether or not to move FSSS

Thank you for taking the time to review these comments. We realize the road ahead is difficult and things will not be easy. We look forward to working with you on the process and would appreciate a vision that could bring us all together. Thank you!

Sincerely,

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