Dear Friends and Colleagues,

This afternoon I spoke with the campus community about the need to realign our base budget with our current enrollment. I outlined a series of steps that the University will take to continue to deliver an exceptional and transformative education. We must maintain fiscal responsibility and serve as good stewards of our students’ and state’s investments, and we must adjust to the needs and interests of today’s students.

As many of you know, our general fund budget is tightly tied to our enrollment. When enrollment increased rather dramatically from 2008 to 2011, we increased the number of employees to assist the higher numbers of students. Now we must adjust our workforce to reflect the fewer number of students. We must adjust the number of faculty to 606 and non-faculty to 849. This will require reductions equivalent to 52 full-time faculty and 149 full-time non-faculty. These important decisions will be made with consultation and input from our campus community.

Even with these changes, UM will have 1,455 employees – more faculty and staff than in previous years when we had approximately the same number of students as today. The University can and will continue to provide the same high-quality education and experience to our students.

Along with staffing reductions in all of our sectors, we will look at adjusting academic programs that have experienced substantive enrollment declines. We will consolidate administrative functions and reconfigure support programs.

The University will continue to build our recruiting operation to attract more students, and we will focus on promoting and increasing support in areas where we are experiencing enrollment growth so that our students are retained and progress to graduation.

The details of my speech will be posted here. I am asking the campus to submit comments, which will be read and summarized by student, faculty and staff leadership, and I will consider those as we move forward.

I assure you that we will not lose sight of our fundamental identity and role. We offer a strong foundation for all of our students because that’s what a vibrant democracy needs, and because employers are looking for graduates with a broad-based understanding of our changing world who can think critically, act ethically and express themselves clearly.

I am focused on preserving our mission and the educational opportunities we deliver to our students. The University of Montana always has been the place where we face challenges directly, we support one another, we work together, and we get things done.
All of us – those of you currently on campus and those who graduated years ago – represent UM and are members of the UM family. We are all recruiters and represent UM’s academic mission. In this time of challenge and change, we need to remember and promote the many good things about UM, including our accomplished alumni, faculty and staff; the increasing number of research awards and private dollars; and our dynamic student body. These are the elements and experiences of UM I will work to preserve and further grow, because they are at the heart of our beloved University.

Sincerely,

Royce C. Engstrom
President
University of Montana

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