

What's Wrong About Planned FSU Faculty Layoffs?

In June, the FSU administration announced planned layoffs of 21 tenured faculty and 41 non-tenured faculty (both tenure-earning and non-tenure track) for budgetary reasons. The UFF-FSU Chapter is actively opposing these layoffs, as have UFF chapters at other universities (with some success). Here at FSU, there are various problems with the criteria and procedures followed that do not seem to comply with our collective bargaining agreement's (CBA) provisions, with widely shared norms, or with general standards of fairness.

1. Opaque, arbitrary, and inconsistent decisions.

- In multiple instances, tenured faculty members were slated for layoffs while non-tenured faculty were retained and new faculty in the same or similar areas were being recruited and hired. Roughly the same number of new hires joined FSU's faculty this fall semester as the number notified of layoffs in June. Plans and candidate searches are underway for substantial numbers of new hires during this academic year.
- In the case of at least one unit, some faculty members were notified that "programmatic needs" forced their layoff. Subsequently, they were asked to serve on a committee to identify programmatic needs in the newly reorganized unit. If the needs of the new unit were not yet clear, how could these have been the basis for faculty layoff decisions?
- In another case, selected faculty members, including non-tenured faculty members, were moved to newly created units just prior to decisions to close the units from which they were moved, leaving behind others, including tenured faculty, who were laid off.
- Planned tenured faculty layoffs will fall mainly on older and women faculty members (women are 52% of planned tenured faculty layoffs but only 31% of tenured faculty).

2. The financial necessity of the layoffs is not clear.

- Five (5) million dollars in salaries are being paid to FSU "double dippers," including \$2 million to the 13 most highly paid. These 13 are mostly high-level administrators who retired with hefty pensions before rejoining the administration. If they offered to work at half pay (while keeping their pensions of course), enough would be saved to rescind roughly half of all the layoffs of tenured faculty.
- Faculty ranks increased 8% for the five academic years ending in spring 2008, while administrative staff (A&P) ranks increased 43%. See "Where Does the FSU Money Go?" study at [www.uff-fsu.org](http://www.uff-fsu.org/art/UFF-FSUMoneyStudy.pdf) (URL= <http://www.uff-fsu.org/art/UFF-FSUMoneyStudy.pdf>) How many VPs (asst./assoc./full) do we need? So far as we know, none has been designated for layoff.
- "FSU's finances remain healthy ... [including] ... unrestricted net assets of \$312.7 million" – Standard and Poors, May 2009. These funds could retain for over 100 years the faculty notified of layoff. Of course FSU has other needs for

these funds, but it would be no great hardship for FSU to retain these faculty until state revenues and higher education funding are restored.

- The University of Florida recently announced plans to hire 100 new faculty, relying initially on stimulus money and on increased tuition revenues afterwards. FSU must face much the same tuition revenue situation. In both cases, why not retain current faculty and scale back the new hiring plans?
- Within weeks of announcing that it would be forced to lay off faculty for budgetary reasons, FSU announced it would boost funding for Engineering by nearly \$1 million. We support a stronger College of Engineering, but we seriously question whether FSU should be increasing funding in one area while laying off tenured faculty in other important areas.

3. Faculty had little say about academic matters, matters that are historically and properly matters for faculty determination.

- The administration's public references to substantial faculty input on the Budget Crisis Committee (BCC) gloss over the fact that the three (3) faculty members were outnumbered by eight (8) VPs. Further, as Faculty Senate President Eric Walker, a BCC member, noted in April, the leaked plan reportedly "*from*" the BCC was in fact from the Provost's Office and addressed *to* the BCC.
- There has been disregard of faculty views revealed in much broader samples. In particular, UFF-FSU polls of several hundred faculty members on their preferences among furloughs, pay cuts, and layoffs showed a strong preference for furloughs as the least noxious of these evils. Top administrators ignored this option in adopting their budget-cutting plan.
- It is hard to escape the conclusion that the budget crisis has been used as a pretext for academic restructuring. How else can one explain the sudden disappearance of the reorganization initiative that was previously quite prominent? It appears that the FSU administration concluded it could achieve its academic restructuring goals under the guise of adapting to a budget crisis. Academic program changes should involve a more substantial role for faculty via the Faculty Senate.