

UFF-FSU

United Faculty of Florida

Florida State University

NEWS RELEASE

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UFF-FSU urges trustees to stop faculty layoffs

The Florida State University chapter of the United Faculty of Florida (UFF-FSU) has urged FSU's Board of Trustees to halt the administration's plan to lay off 62 members of the faculty.

In a letter sent to each member of the Board of Trustees, UFF-FSU President Jack Fiorito urged the Board to halt the university administration's plan to lay off 62 members of the faculty.

Citing the university's considerable untapped cash reserves, enormous growth in administrative personnel and salaries over the past five years and the long-term impact that faculty layoffs would have on the ability of FSU to serve the state of Florida, Fiorito urged "the Board of Trustees to exercise its authority and mandate a halt to faculty layoff proceedings while considering alternatives that would have a less detrimental impact on the university, its employees, our students, and the State of Florida."

While the immediate impact of the layoffs will fall on FSU's ability to serve students and attract faculty, UFF-FSU noted that in the long term the state as a whole will suffer. Fiorito pointed out that two of the departments slated for "radical downsizing" are Geology and Oceanography. In a state beset by sinkholes and hurricanes and where policymakers are currently developing strategies for regulating petroleum drilling and controlling coastal erosion, it seems foolish to shrink the state's expertise in these areas. Likewise, the letter to the Board of Trustees questions the wisdom of eliminating the

program in Math and Science Education in a state and nation where math and science skills among elementary and secondary students are a serious concern.

The letter asks the Board of Trustees to consider a number of proposals that were made to the administration but which, UFF-FSU asserts, were ignored. These include “reducing administrative bloat, voluntary give-backs by highly-paid double-dipping administrators, furloughs, and utilizing existing financial reserves.”

UFF-FSU, an affiliate of the Florida Education Association, represents approximately 1,800 faculty members at Florida State University.

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This is the text of the letter sent to each member of the FSU Board of Trustees:

The Florida State University chapter of the United Faculty of Faculty urges the Board of Trustees to rescind the 62 faculty layoffs announced in June by the FSU administration.

We believe that these layoffs are neither necessary nor prudent given the current financial situation of the university and the long-term impact that these layoffs will have on the university's ability to serve Floridians. In particular, we note that:

- In a statewide workforce of 130,000 non-higher education employees, 159 were laid off in the latest budget cuts, or about 1/10 of 1 percent (0.1%).. Why does FSU find it necessary to lay off 62 among a faculty workforce of about 2000 faculty employees (3%)? Why is FSU’s faculty layoff rate roughly 30 times higher than the rate in other state employment?

- While FSU has laid off 62 faculty, the other ten state universities combined have laid off just 44, based on reports we have seen to date. The University of Florida laid off just nine (9) faculty members, and has just announced plans to hire additional faculty.

Although additional faculty layoffs may arise at other schools, why is FSU so far ahead of all others in this very notorious distinction?

- Within days of notifying 62 FSU faculty members of layoffs, it was reported that FSU was contributing to an \$800,000 funding boost for the FAMU-FSU Engineering college. How can FSU find funds to boost this program while laying off faculty?
- A 2008 report on FSU spending found that from 2002-03 to 2007-08, FSU administrative and professional employment grew by 43.4%, while faculty employment, the people who teach Florida State students, grew by only 8.1%. How many vice presidents and other high-level administrators does FSU need, and how many are being laid off?
- FSU's payroll (as of February, 2009) includes roughly \$5 million in "double dipper" salaries -- salaries paid to 86 persons who have already retired at least once and are drawing a state pension. Some of these folks are drawing very modest pensions and very modest current salaries, but the best-paid 13 double-dippers at FSU, including the Provost and a few vice-presidents, are drawing roughly \$2 million, with salaries ranging from \$89,000 to \$295,000. Perhaps some "leaders" should demonstrate leadership by undertaking some personal sacrifice that they can clearly afford. If these 13 double-dippers were to voluntarily give back half of their second salary, FSU could afford to retain about 10 of the faculty members slated for layoff.
- Eleven (11) of the 21 tenured faculty slated for layoff (52%) are women. Women comprise only about 31% of tenured faculty at FSU. Is it possible that biases that devalue women's work and chosen fields of academic endeavor influenced decisions on tenured faculty layoffs?
- The wisdom of targeting the specific programs chosen for layoffs is doubtful. In a state nearly surrounded by water and regularly subject to hurricanes, Oceanography is

taking one of the biggest hits. In a state where offshore drilling is a prominent policy issue and sinkholes regularly swallow homes, Geology is being radically downsized. In a state and nation where math and science skills among elementary and secondary students are a serious concern, Math and Science Education are being eliminated.

- Florida State's future is seriously jeopardized. Good faculty members will not come to a university where tenure is tenuous and where junior faculty are hired and fired in the same year despite excellent teaching, research, and service to Florida.

- Standard and Poors' May, 2009 rating of FSU says that "FSU's finances remain healthy ... Financial resource levels are solid; at the close of fiscal 2008, the university had unrestricted net assets of \$312.7 million." FSU should draw on these funds to maintain FSU's high standards before undertaking layoffs that will have a long-term impact on its ability to educate the next generation of Floridians.

In summary, we feel that the current faculty layoffs are not necessary, nor are they prudent for the long-term health of the university. Over the past months, UFF has proposed a number of alternatives including reducing administrative bloat, voluntary give-backs by highly-paid double-dipping administrators, furloughs, and utilizing existing financial reserves, but the administration has routinely ignored or dismissed these suggestions. It is time for Trustees to use the oversight powers they hold to redirect a misguided administration. We therefore urge the Board of Trustees to exercise its authority and mandate a halt to faculty layoff proceedings while considering alternatives that would have a less detrimental impact on the university, its employees, our students, and the State of Florida.