

From the *Tallahassee Democrat*

FSU faculty union: Keep jobs

By Doug Blackburn • DEMOCRAT Senior WRITER • September 2, 2009

The union representing faculty at Florida State University is lobbying to keep the jobs of 62 professors and staff members who have received layoff notices.

In letters dated Saturday, Aug. 29, United Faculty of Florida-FSU chapter president Jack Fiorito wrote to all 13 members of the board of trustees, urging them to rescind the layoffs that the board approved in June.

At its June meeting, the board OK'd a three-year budget that adjusts for \$82 million less in state revenue than the university had three years ago.

The plan called for the merger of some departments and the elimination of some degree programs. It was also described as flexible in light of the recession, and the possibility of an upturn in the economy.

The board's next scheduled meeting is Sept. 17.

Very few of the faculty targeted for layoffs have been let go, even though they have received notices. University administrators have said they intend to use federal stimulus money to continue employing professors through at least the end of the new school year.

Fiorito, whose union represents approximately 1,800 faculty members at Florida State, believes the layoffs are unwarranted and will harm FSU in numerous ways.

"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," Fiorito wrote.

The letter lists nine arguments for undoing the layoffs. They include:

"While FSU has laid off 62 faculty, the other 10 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?"

Eric Walker, FSU's Faculty-Senate president and a member of the board of trustees, is wary of comparing numbers between schools in the State University System.

"One of the problems outside of a sound bite," Walker said, "is these categories of employees are very tricky to specify when you move from institution to institution. I don't know what data Jack and the union are looking at."

Walker, a 25-year English professor at FSU, reiterated his comments from the June board meeting, when he bemoaned the termination of 21 tenured faculty members.

"When 21 tenured faculty members receive notices, it's a cold, cold moment," he said.