

## Senate Executive Committee meeting

Friday, August 29 from 12-1pm via Zoom (calendar link will be provided).

### Agenda

- I. Welcome
- II. Brief Remarks
- IV. Potential Open Letter - Introduction and Discussion
- V. Next steps, and adjourn

President Scholz, Provost Long and University of Oregon Board of Trustees,

These are challenging times for the University of Oregon. UO leadership has shared with us the structural deficits that challenge the sustainability of UO's future. There is also ongoing anxiety caused by the federal administration's shifting funding priorities and policies as they impact many members of our community – faculty, staff and students.

The constituents of the Senate --career faculty, tenure-line faculty, Officers of Administration and classified staff -- are deeply concerned about the impact of prospective budget cuts on programs and on the quality of education that we offer our students. We also are concerned about how these decisions are being made.

While much of the current fiscal uncertainty is driven by external factors , we have a choice as an institution as to how we will respond to it. The perceived lack of transparency and open dialogue required by our principles of shared governance has shaken confidence in the process. This has also left many to question the fairness of the process. Finally, rumors resulting from the existing process have led to rampant speculation that amplified these anxieties and led to justifiable fear about their future at the university or for their careers.

Concerns include:

- **The timeline.** It has been stated that the timeline is not one of the Administration's choosing. We'd like to call on the Board of Trustees to allow the university's leadership an appropriate amount of time to properly support an intentional, transparent and strategic process where shared governance contributes to a future for all those that compose the university and its programs.
- **Performance Criteria.** There is a concern about the performance criteria that may be used in terminating career or tenure-track faculty if there are department reductions. The processes for tenure and promotion are clearly articulated in each unit's tenure and promotion

policies. A rigorous process of internal and external evaluation and review is conducted at the university before faculty are granted a promotion. However, no such deliberative and comprehensive process has been identified for the termination of tenure and/or teaching contracts. The result is that individuals who have been working to meet the expectations stated in their unit's policies may not be adequate in preventing a contract termination.

- **Diminishment of tenure.** The termination of tenured faculty will diminish the institution of tenure at our research university. The institution of tenure not only protects academic freedom, but also assists in developing deep expertise in scholarly inquiry and excellence in teaching. This could have a chilling effect in recruiting and retaining the best scholars in any given field. Diminishment of tenure risks our standing as an R1 university. Tenure should only be violated when all alternatives have been exhausted.
- **Program closures.** The UO Senate and its committees have an important role in supporting the development of and updates to courses and programs. This process is rigorous, and receives input from across campus, and sometimes with approval of the Higher Education Coordinating Committee (for new programs). It evaluates the budget, staffing, faculty need and potential student interest. However, no similar process exists for the elimination of programs. We call for an update to university policies that more formally enshrines the role of the Senate in the sunseting or cancellation of a program.
- **Impact on the student experience.** Faculty and staff cuts will be felt across campus, in our classrooms, in departmental advising offices, and in student services. No information on the way university leadership will mitigate these impacts has been shared with the university community. Planning to mitigate student impacts should include student leadership as well as students impacted by any proposed program closures.

Following our commitment to shared governance, we ask that the University Administration and Board of Trustees allow for more time for the deliberation and strategic, intentional planning, so that impacted stakeholders have a clear voice in the process.

Sincerely,

1. Dyana Mason, Associate Professor, Planning Public Policy and Management, UO Senate President.
2. Edward Davis, Associate Professor, Earth Sciences, Director of the Condon Fossil Collection of the UO Museum of Natural and Cultural History, UO Senate Vice President.
3. Prissila Moreo, ASUO President