



September 22, 2009

To: Dr. David Williams, UAHuntsville President

From: UAHuntsville Faculty Senate Executive Committee

RE: Concerns and Questions about Policies and Procedures

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This is a time of challenges. All aspects of UAHuntsville have been affected, particularly its core functions of high-quality education and academic research. While the most recent challenges are due, in part, to the downturn in the state and national economies, we are concerned that they are being exacerbated by strategic decisions made within the university administration.

These challenging times require sacrifice. Our concern, however, is that we do not see “shared sacrifice” across the university. In particular, we are concerned that budgetary priorities are not focused on the core elements of the university’s mission. Nor do we feel that the faculty has been consulted in setting these priorities as might be expected as a part of shared governance. These impressions are driven by a lack of open and honest communication and are counterproductive to developing a thriving academic environment. Let us be clear: we understand that you and your executive administrators must be empowered to make strategic decisions related to university operations. However, we strongly believe that faculty must have a significant role in any decisions related to academics and/or scholarly research activities, including relevant hiring decisions.

We hereby respectfully request a written response to the questions that follow. We request that the written response be delivered to the Faculty Senate President, Dr. Letha Etzkorn, by October 6, 2009. Your written response will be forwarded in its entirety to the Faculty Senate and will be posted on the Faculty Senate webpage.

We feel strongly that the following questions are representative of symptoms of a serious systemic problem at UAHuntsville. You have told us, time and time again, that you cannot succeed without the support of the faculty. Yet, the faculty continue to feel marginalized. We have experienced severe budget cuts, while the number of administrators grows and research centers and personnel become priorities. The administration must respond to our concerns by implementing a new communication strategy that both informs faculty of priorities and decisions and seeks significant faculty input regarding these priorities and decisions. We might not always agree with your vision. However, the faculty is much more likely to support you if you a) clarify your goals, b) explain how you intend to reach those goals, c) seek faculty input on the methods to reach those goals, and d) seriously consider that input in implementing decisions. Please help us forge a new cooperative and productive partnership between the administration and the faculty. The faculty senate wants to work with the administration to achieve UAHuntsville’s mission and goals.

### **Questions**

1. As faculty, our role is to provide excellence in instruction, scholarly and creative pursuits, and service. Further, we believe that faculty should set the tone and direction for academic and research endeavors at the university. We believe that, as president, you are in the position to facilitate faculty success and, thus enable the university to achieve the Powers of Ten goals. We believe shared governance requires that faculty and the administration work together in setting priorities and policies that support the university’s goals and mission.

If you disagree with any part of this philosophy, please explain why.

2. It is our understanding that a new research center has been established at UAHuntsville.

- a. What is the source of funding for this Center? Is this funding coming from UAHuntsville state appropriations or some other outside source? What is this new center's operating budget? What are the salary amounts and operating costs?
  - b. What is the justification for the establishment of this new center given cuts elsewhere in the university?
  - c. What steps were taken to review and establish this new center?
3. It is our understanding that a new position of Director for Space Policy has been created at UAHuntsville.
- a. To whom does this new director report?
  - b. What is the source of funds for this new position?
  - c. The advertised salary for this position was \$175,000-\$200,000. What is the justification for this salary which is three times the average UAHuntsville faculty salary?
  - d. We have information that the job advertisement was posted on August 19, 2009 and closed the following Monday. How can a thorough search for qualified candidates occur in such a short window of time?
  - e. At first glance, this hire presents an obvious ethical problem. Please address this.
4. Issues have been raised regarding fiscal management and expenditure priorities. Given the assumption of shared sacrifice, we request clarification and justification of the following:
- a. We understand that the Faculty lounge of the Shelby Center, arguably a brand new building, has recently been refurbished/redecorated at a cost of over \$100,000. What is the justification for this expenditure, especially when other classrooms in university buildings lack sufficient A/V equipment, chalk, markers, and erasers?
  - b. We understand that several hundred thousand dollars were spent on the campus master plan activity. How much was actually spent? Was it possible to delay this activity given the financial constraints at this time?
  - c. The faculty are happy with the direction you have taken with convocation. However, we are concerned about the expenses associated with it. What funds were used for the 2008 and the 2009 convocations? Did this money come strictly from the foundation or were state appropriations used?
5. It's critical that faculty have the primary role in establishing the criteria and qualifications for the selection of new academic faculty and administrators. We are concerned that the Business Administration faculty's standards and qualifications for their dean candidates were dismissed by the search committee chair. For example, we have been told that neither academic experience nor a terminal degree is required for this position. Why are faculty standards being ignored in this search?
6. At a recent address to the faculty senate, you advised us that Dr. Killingsworth has generated various reports regarding certain support offices whose efficiency is a major concern of the faculty.
- a. What are the results of these reports? We request that these reports be delivered to us for review.
  - b. What actions will be taken to address issues raised in the reports?
7. Regarding the Powers of Ten goals:
- a. The goals of increased student enrollment, Ph.D. graduates, and degree programs require significant faculty effort. What is your plan to enable the academic units to achieve these goals? What resources are necessary to reach these goals and from where will these resources come?
  - b. Webpages dedicated to the Powers of Ten indicate that committees have been formed. Some faculty have participated on these committees. What is the status on the committees' activities? Faculty senate would appreciate the opportunity to review any reports or strategic plans generated by these committees. When will these be available?
8. The apparent addition of a significant number of upper level executive positions in the last two years seems unjustifiable given the budget cuts.
- a. Please provide a list of all the executive, associate and assistant vice-presidents their full title/department.
  - b. Please comment on how these positions have led to a more successful university.
  - c. Given that highly qualified people have filled these positions, why are outside consultants being hired to consider issues like realignment, recruitment, and retention?
  - d. It is our understanding that a new VP position has been created, whose duties include ceremonies and special events? How is this justified?
9. Faculty are concerned about the change in the housing policy requiring all freshman and sophomores to live on campus regardless of their residency status. We understand that an appeal is required to escape this requirement.
- a. Did the administration consider the effects of this policy on recruitment and enrollment?
  - b. Did the administration seek input from faculty and students regarding this policy?