

On Restoration

May 24, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

On August 17, 2020 the administration asked us to break our contract. They asked us to give up 5.5% of our retirement and another 3% percent in salary. They said it was a proactive measure to help weather a potential financial disaster, and that this sacrifice would allow them to retain staff, who would otherwise be fired in the midst of a pandemic. The stated goal was to give the administration flexibility to respond to the profound uncertainty we faced in the 2020-2021 school year.

The majority of the faculty agreed to this sacrifice. They did so to help the university, and to protect the staff. They did it because they trusted the administration. A minority of the faculty did not trust the administration, and did not vote to break our contract. The administration's bargaining team has proven the cynics correct: our leadership cannot be trusted.

Fairfield has had a spectacular year in terms of finances, and it looks promising for the future. We have the largest ever class incoming, we kept students on campus in dorms, we took one \$5,000,000 drawdown from the endowment to satisfy "strategic initiatives," and the president plans to take another. The University received government money to offset Covid losses, and they sat on the funds voluntarily forsaken by the faculty (while the stock market climbed, increasing the value of our losses). *And yet staff were still fired*, even in key areas that directly serve students. Staff were stuck with this same reduction in retirement funding, with no vote, and were still arbitrarily terminated. Now, instead of celebrating the hard work that allowed the institution to survive, the university administration is making extraordinary efforts to retain our retirement, to avoid giving us our own money back. Our sacrifices have been taken for granted, and our trust betrayed.

To be clear, while the President was "golfing with prospects," and the rest of the administration worked from a comfortable distance in home offices, *we were here*. The staff spent their winter doing everything from sanitizing desks and maintaining facilities to delivering mail and shepherding students into and out of quarantine, hoping to avoid contracting the virus. Faculty taught in tents, or in different classrooms every week, and to a constantly shifting array of students as they moved on campus and off, into isolation and out. We reconfigured labs and studios, learned new software, rewrote lesson plans, and often taught material twice or more because there was no room to squeeze students in, no way to get remote and physically present students on the same page. We put our research on hold, jeopardizing our long-term career advancement. Many of us attempted to teach Fairfield students while our own children were home and unable to learn in person, unable to be in their own schools.

Faculty and staff kept the university open. We risked our health to make it possible for Fairfield students to live on campus, and for the university to charge them for it. (And charge

students they did.) The staff fed the students, cleaned up after them, managed their disagreements, calmed frantic parents, relentlessly disinfected anything that might spread Covid; they manned the gates, monitored the virus, kept the facilities open. The faculty taught students, counseled, and consoled them. We taught students in their basements from our basements, from our kitchen tables to their beds, and everywhere on campus that people could safely gather. We swabbed our noses, uploaded our health information in dubious apps, double-masked, washed our hands, and scrambled to be first in line for vaccines. The administration has taken this moment --this exact moment-- to catalyze our sacrifice into "strategic initiatives" designed to further their own careers. This is callous disregard rather than *cura personalis*.

Many of you have contacted us to express your outrage. We hear you. We are working to counter the efforts of the administration to undermine our morale, our commitment, and ultimately our university. We ask for your patience, and your help. A newsletter is forthcoming with ideas for how we can fight back, and how we can resist being fooled again as we negotiate our next long-term contract. The Faculty Welfare Committee has been in conversation with the Faculty Salary Committee about our legal options. Despite the fact that anyone can read our MOU, and anyone can see through the pettifogging and dissembling email coming from the administrative team, we will provide a lawyer if needed. [We thank all of our dues-paying members for making this possible, for making us the strong, united faculty voice that we are.](#)

Administrators come and go; faculty endure. Along with students, staff, and our alums, we are the beating heart of this institution. We will survive this current administration as we have so many others. We retain our faith in our elected representatives on the FSC, and we wish them all the patience and strength they will need. Meanwhile, send us your thoughts, and get rested this summer. It promises to be an active fall semester.

In solidarity,

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