



United University Professions
Albany Chapter

January 2, 2021

Dear President Rodriguez:

I am writing on behalf of our Chapter Executive Committee to express our opposition to the campus's budget plan. The deep budget cuts being proposed, and acted upon, threaten our core institutional values, the people who work to fulfill our mission and the students that we strive to serve. The shifting political climate in New York State and in Washington D.C. presents us with an opportunity to avoid going down this destructive path. We are urging you to seize this opportunity and show that UAlbany can be a leader in higher education during this difficult financial moment.

Further budget cuts are inhumane. Cutting further into our campus budget will result in mass layoffs and non-renewals of employees. Sending faculty and staff into the ranks of the unemployed and stripping them of their health benefits should weigh on us heavily in normal times. During a national economic crisis paired with a global health pandemic it should be unthinkable. It is contrary to the collective spirit promoted by the OneUAlbany message.

Deep, immediate budget cuts are unnecessary. The campus budget assumes a 20% cut in state support to our campus. We now know that this assumption was wrong. The Governor's executive budget cuts funding for SUNY campuses by 5% at most. A large federal stimulus may leave our state support untouched. Moreover, any new stimulus bill will likely send millions of dollars directly to our campus. This easing of pressure on our structural deficit and an injection of cash into our reserves allows us to use gradual measures to reduce overall personnel costs in ways that avoid the pain of immediate, deep cuts.

Further budget cuts will make us weaker, not stronger. Eliminating programs, reducing course offerings and increasing class sizes will only impoverish our students' education and undermine our mission of providing a diverse learning environment for a diverse student body. Many units vital to our core institutional mission are already under-resourced and have depended on the herculean effort of faculty and staff to sustain. This model is unsustainable and unfair both to the employees charged with

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running them and the students who have come to depend on them. Further cuts, like the program deactivations in the humanities of 2010, will damage our national and international reputation, and undermine our ability to grow and develop as an institution.

We call on you to work with your leadership team to revise the campus budget plan. Our budget plan should respect the worth and dignity of the members of our campus community, preserve our core mission as a public university charged with serving the educational needs of all learners, and invite real collaboration between faculty, students, and upper administration in charting our campus's future.

Specifically we call on you to:

- Develop a budget plan that aims to reduce expenditures by no more than 5% per year for academic and non-academic units over the next four years. This allows us to take advantage of cost savings generated through retirements, other separations from university service and voluntary reductions in work obligation.
- Create a Budget Review Committee with representatives from campus union leadership, faculty governance and the Student and Graduate Student Associations. This committee will receive reports on campus revenues and expenditures from the Vice President for Finance and Administration and report its assessment of our budget situation to the campus community.
- Expand the "Futuring" committee to include representatives from the same bodies, along with a broad sampling of university members. Consistent with the Policies of the Board of Trustees, any exercise to project plans for the future of the university must include faculty and should include student leaders.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aaron Major', written in a cursive style.

Aaron Major
President, UUP Albany Chapter