



Southern Illinois University Carbondale

FACULTY ASSOCIATION, IEA-NEA

A Professional Association Dedicated to the Advancement and Wellbeing of Higher Education

www.siuca.org

1500 E. Plaza Drive, Suite 5, Carterville IL 62918 Phone: (618) 733-4472 or (800) 431-3730 FAX: (618) 733-4481

12 September 2019

Dear Interim President Dorsey, Chair Gilbert, and members of the SIU Board of Trustees,

While I was not able to speak before you in person today, I wanted to send you some remarks in writing. This letter will also be shared with the faculty on the Carbondale campus.

The agenda for this week's board meeting included the Board's endorsement of raises for faculty and staff at SIUE and the SIU Medical school for the 2020 fiscal year. The agenda is silent about any raises for SIUC faculty and staff. In recent days the SIUC campus administration has made it clear that they have no plan to provide employees with any raises for FY 2020.

Simply put, if the SIUC administration fails to provide any raises to faculty, this will make our nearly catastrophically morale problem even worse, leading to even more faculty departures from SIUC. Morale matters. If faculty do not want to stay at SIUC, students will not come to SIUC.

Faculty at SIUC are grievously underpaid. The last joint salary study by the administration and Faculty Association, done with 2016 data, showed that we were underpaid, compared to our peers, by 15%. With only a minimal 1% raise since then we have no doubt fallen further behind. We aren't comparing SIUC salaries to those at Harvard or even the University of Illinois: we are comparing peers at similar state universities, which are buffeted by the similar pressures on state funding and enrollments. They have managed to maintain adequate salaries for their faculty. SIUE has managed to fund decent raises despite the Illinois budget crisis, and now has a plan for faculty raises in the years to come. But SIUC has allowed its faculty to fall further and further behind.

The board's own figures show that SIUC staff have received raises that, compounded, amount to 12% over the last ten years. During the same period inflation has gone up by 19%. This means that employees with ten years of service have been rewarded with a 7% cut in real pay. No wonder so many faculty are leaving SIUC.

The campus administration points out that a decline in tuition revenue this year means that university will need to cut its budget. Fewer students do mean less tuition. But there are also fewer and fewer faculty on campus, leading to automatic savings in salaries. The question is one of priorities. SIUC has a decision to make. We can prioritize funding for the faculty who do the essential teaching and research work of the university, or we can continue the cycle of decline by continuing to underpay faculty.

Just how bad is morale at SIUC? In preparation for the next round of bargaining, the FA did a survey of faculty on campus last spring. One question asked about morale. 173 faculty, union members and non-members alike, responded. Asked to evaluate morale on campus, here's what they said:

Very Good	0%
Good	5%
Neutral	18%
Poor	34%
Very Poor	43%

Not a single faculty member said that morale at SIUC was very good. Three quarters said it was poor or very poor. SIUC faculty are scholars, scientists, and artists committed to our students and our research. We have continued to do first-class work. But our colleagues are voting with their feet. And many faculty are increasingly conflicted about recruiting students to an institution that does not support its faculty.

If SIUC is going to turn things around, it needs to stop punishing faculty for staying at Carbondale. The current administration has failed even the rudimentary test of offering rhetorical consolation for low salaries. Rather than admitting that low salaries are a real problem and making a long-term commitment to bringing our salaries back into line with our peers, administrators fail even to acknowledge the problem. This adds insult to injury. The implication is that faculty should be happy to work at SIUC while being paid much less than their peers and losing more ground to inflation every year.

I believe that the single biggest issue facing SIUC is not enrollment, but morale. Students won't return to a campus if faculty don't want to work there. The SIUC administration needs to recognize that morale is a massive problem, and that miserably low faculty salaries are a major part of that problem. A realistic plan to reverse the long-term decline in faculty pay would be the single best investment SIUC could make to keep quality faculty at SIUC and start bringing students back to our campus.

Sincerely yours,



David M. Johnson
President, SIUC Faculty Association