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OPEN LETTER:

**THE FACULTY CALL FOR STRONGER, BETTER LEADERSHIP
FOR THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY**

To: Board of Trustees, California State University
From: California Faculty Association
July 7, 2009

Dear CSU Trustees,

We are all quite aware that we are living in grim and stressful times for our country, for our state, and for our university.

Without leadership, times like this can feel like—and alas, perhaps be—hopeless times.

As we see at the national level, however, **with** leadership grounded in a vision; with leadership committed to bringing people together—people can weather bad times with their spirits, their trust, and their hope intact.

The CSU desperately needs that kind of leadership now—yours as Trustees as well as the Chancellor's.

Leadership in this situation means fighting for what you believe in publicly, relentlessly, passionately day in and day out—not just in these meetings in this room every other month.

We need to hear the people in this room publicly speak the horrible truth that if we continue the funding path we are on, the CSU—the People's University as we have known it—will soon be an historical artifact and not a thriving institution.

Instead of this kind of leadership, we regularly read letters to state government leaders that reassure them: the CSU can afford to give back millions of dollars and that we can “manage” with enormous cuts.

Indeed, we recently read a letter to a legislative committee deliberating cuts of hundreds of millions of dollars that read, “I will not waste your time calling on you to refrain from the reductions to the CSU....”

Statements like this are profoundly disheartening to the faculty, staff, and students of the CSU. Moreover, they are statements that signal everyone—elected leaders and the broader public—that it is “okay,” even “reasonable,” to cut the CSU to shreds. They are statements that hasten and indeed facilitate the process.

Leadership in a public institution like ours also means prioritizing the needs of our university above self-interest or self-protection.

We are mystified at the apparent reluctance of the Board of Trustees to support AB 656. This bill would create a dedicated funding stream for the CSU similar to a very successful program in Texas. Although CFA presented information about AB 656 at two Trustees meetings and provided numerous opportunities to learn about it, CSU leaders have yet to schedule even a discussion of the bill, much less endorse it.

Those of us who have fought for funding for the CSU for years find this reluctance to embrace a reliable source of funding simply inexplicable. We are left to wonder if there is resistance on the part of individual Trustees to taxing industries on behalf of higher education.

In addition to resistance to AB656, quite a few Californians have been shocked to discover that CSU leaders have spent heavily on private lobbyists to fight a bill that would extend reasonable transparency to CSU auxiliaries that conduct CSU-related business.

SB 218 simply would apply the same rules that make other government entities operate openly to the taxpayers. It is always unseemly for a public servant to spend taxpayer dollars to campaign against accountability to those same taxpayers. To do it during the worst funding crisis the CSU has ever seen is an embarrassment to the entire system.

And finally, enlightened leadership means treating people with respect and compassion. Hence, as we approached the idea of furloughs, we expected that the discussions would reflect a reasonable give and take.

The take part was clear—9.5% of faculty salary on top of sacrifices faculty (as well as students and staff) already have made. For the faculty, the sacrifices include mushrooming workload, loss of 1000 faculty members in just the last year, and failure to pay negotiated raises that add up to significantly more than the proposed furlough.

In exchange for all of this sacrifice, we expected some “gives” that could become part of what the faculty would vote on:

- 1) Some guarantees that workload for the faculty would be proportionately reduced, thereby demonstrating the administration’s commitment that this is a furlough, not just a pay cut disguised as a furlough.
- 2) Some guarantee that the furlough would, in fact, save classes for students and jobs for faculty members and staff. Such a guarantee simply reflects the Chancellor’s purported **reason** for discussing the furlough at all.

Our expectations for “give **and** take” were sorely disappointed. At the end of the day, we got no commitment—none—that a faculty furlough would save a single class for a single student or a single job for a single faculty member.

This is failed leadership on a number of counts:

- 1) It was unnecessarily inflexible—we read every day about other managers in other institutions agreeing to precisely the kinds of things we were suggesting.
- 2) It was another example of self-interest rather than acting for the good of the institution. Inflexibility protected “managerial discretion” – but has reaped huge costs in loss of trust and damaged morale

And ironically, the “leadership” on this issue was counter-productive. The position staked out by the administration will confound the faculty vote; many people will vote based on how they feel they have been **treated** rather than simply on their willingness to take a furlough.

There is another way— old school politics, pre-recession management policies, and self-interested leadership cannot get us through what lies ahead. If there is to be a chance, we need a different kind of leadership.

We are not putting it all on you, however. We’ll do our part.

As toughened veterans of the state budget war, we will continue to press for state funding for the CSU and other essential public needs. We will continue to campaign for AB 656 for CSU funding and SB 218 for openness to taxpayers. We will continue to work in coalition to change the state’s budget situation so that the CSU will have the state funding it needs.

We call on you, the Trustees of the California State University to see to it that the leadership needed for the CSU comes forward to stand up for the CSU.

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