

President Kathy Johnson
University of New Orleans
New Orleans, LA 70148
January 30, 2025

Dear President Johnson,

The Faculty Senate writes to communicate its thoughts and concerns regarding the recently-announced furlough plan for the University of New Orleans. The Senate recognizes the University is currently in a budget crisis and must act quickly to address its financial shortfall. We sympathize with the challenge you face. At the same time, it is imperative the Senate address several issues.

First, we again stress the need for mutual understanding between the President's office and the Senate concerning the meaning of shared governance. We recognize, for example, that decisions concerning furloughs are the President's prerogative. However we also emphasize the benefits of real consultation with the Faculty Senate and the Senate's Executive Committee, which can help increase faculty buy-in for emergency policies and anticipate unintended consequences. The UL Policy Procedures Memorandum for Employee Furloughs (Policy Number: FS-III.XVI.E-1) clearly envisions this kind of collaboration, stating "Upon announcement that furloughs are necessary, the President shall consult and discuss with appropriate faculty and staff in the development of a furlough plan." We note that, in the January 16 meeting with a majority of members of the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) the Administration noted that there would be furloughs coming, and "at some point" we may have to do layoffs. That was, unfortunately, the last communication the SEC had on the matter, and we were not told that layoffs were imminent.

Second, we are deeply concerned about the impact furloughs will have on our already overburdened staff and fragile processes. During the same meeting noted above, it was noted that furloughs often result in a 25-30% attrition of affected employees. While we recognize that layoffs may be necessary, we think that any such layoffs need to be well targeted. We urge you to communicate to us how layoff decisions were made. We anticipate that, as a result of the recent untargeted furloughs, employees who are most effective and who may have significant institutional memory will be the most competitive in the job market and most likely to leave. Such a strategy may deprive the University of critical human resources that are essential for student retention. Related to this matter is the decision to furlough staff earning under \$40,000, which we find to be a draconian measure impacting people earning well below the city's median household income.

Third, members of the Executive Committee were disappointed to hear that the Administration still has not calculated an amount that might be saved by further cuts to the University's Athletics Programs. The VP of Finance informed us that such further cuts have not been made because the athletics season was already underway. Nevertheless, we find it curious that the academic year being underway was not seen as a reason to delay cuts and the reorganization of our academic units. At the same time, we were left to wonder what the cost-benefit analysis of such a calculation is and how it compares to the long-term costs in enrollments and tuition of the reorganization of our academic programs and the expected contraction of our staff. We also believe that bringing UNO into a different Division will open opportunities to attract more in-state student-athletes.

We wish to play our part in facing this crisis. The Faculty Senate has already begun the process of consulting with leadership of the Staff Council and the UNO Foundation with a view

toward creating a Faculty Emergency Assistance Fund that will allow Faculty and members of the community at large to donate to a fund meant to mitigate the impact of the planned furloughs on UNO staff.

Further *transparent and consistent* communications on the decision-making process would go a long way toward shoring up goodwill as we navigate this difficult time together.

Sincerely,

The UNO Faculty Senate

CC: Edwin Litolff, Vice President of Finance and Administration
Darrell Kruger, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs