

University of Louisville AAUP Statement on budget cuts 3/25/16

An extended period of state funding cuts has harmed the Commonwealth's public universities and undermined the state's own directives as laid out in the 1997 higher education reform (KRS 164.003). Faculty and staff salaries have been suppressed, workloads increased, and teaching responsibilities transferred to an expanding contingent of part-time instructors. On the other side of the ledger, the financial burden of attending college has been shifted onto students and their families by rapidly increasing tuition and fees. Faculty, staff, and students have been exploited to the full, such that the core mission of the University is fundamentally compromised.

It is therefore cause for alarm that the Governor is proposing additional and significant cuts to higher education, and proposing to tie future state allocations to as-yet undefined performance criteria. We believe that reducing allocations to public universities to offset shortfalls in the state pension system is misguided. Cutting state appropriations even more than they have been for the last fourteen years will further harm the University's ability to fulfill its state-mandated mission to be a premiere Metropolitan Research institution. Unwise cuts do real damage without improving the state's financial outlook.

It is therefore the position of the AAUP-UofL chapter that, should cuts nonetheless be imposed, they must be administered in a way that does minimal damage to the University's core academic mission, while enhancing shared governance and workplace justice.

First, budget cuts should be absorbed in a manner that insulates the core academic mission of research and teaching. Every effort should be made to shield instructional units and libraries, and prevent tuition increases. Funds from nonacademic sectors of the University, e.g., Central Administration, the UofL Foundation, and Athletics, should be reallocated to academic units. Furthermore, funding cuts to upper administration and Athletics must precede any cuts to academic units. The Athletics budget has never been healthier, while students continue to be charged undue fees to support it, and UofL Athletics shares little compared to peer programs at Kentucky, Alabama, and elsewhere.

Second, shared governance is a bedrock value of an academic institution. Therefore, selective cuts of academic programs or personnel are unacceptable unless made on the basis of criteria that are democratically developed and vetted by the faculty itself, and implemented with real and substantial faculty oversight. Personnel actions must be based solely on criteria stated in the Redbook and the relevant unit's personnel policy. We reject ad hoc efforts to select small numbers of "stars" within programs for preferential treatment relative to their colleagues.

Third, the university is a workplace. Its quality fundamentally depends on the fairness and professionalism with which its members are treated, and on respect for their needs as teachers, scholars, persons, citizens, family members, and colleagues through their career and across the life course. For these reasons, even – especially – in lean times, decision-makers must recognize that the backbone of the University is the professional expertise and hard work of the faculty, including full- and part-time, tenure-track and term, as well as graduate teaching assistants. We reject any attempt to meet budget demands via funding cuts that will negatively affect the faculty's ability to advance the University's educational and research mission or that further harm the economic security of the University's workforce.

Going forward, the University of Louisville must rededicate itself to the promotion of its core academic mission of research and teaching and to the principles and reality of shared governance. It must proceed in a way that enhances, rather than undermines, workplace justice. Upholding these core commitments is perhaps most vital in times of duress.