

April 15, 2009

Dear Department Chair,

I write to you today in your role as department chair and my role as president of our union, the AAUP-AFT. I could use your assistance in clearing up a few matters regarding the Fiscal Year 2010 university budget. First of all, let me state that we value your membership and we appreciate your support. As a colleague, I also understand the predicament we all find ourselves in this budget season.

With regard to the budget deliberations that you are no doubt struggling with, let me reiterate that the union welcomes and encourages discussion, both among faculty groups and in consultation with deans. But matters that might involve contractual alterations should not be considered directly between deans and faculty since the administration is required by law to deal only with the union on such issues.

The union's leadership is fully engaged in the state budget process and we are encouraging the university central administration to share its budget information in a more transparent way so that our members and other university stakeholders can better understand any challenges that lie ahead. For instance, state funding for Rutgers comprises 25% of university funding, but we have not yet seen data that explains the rest of the funding for the university budget. Furthermore, we would expect a fuller discussion of the university's commitments and priorities.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 created a State Fiscal Stabilization Fund. Through this fund, nearly \$1.1 billion of federal stimulus aid is directed to the state of New Jersey for investment in K-12 and higher education. The intent, as outlined in the guidance from the Department of Education, is to avoid devastating cuts and layoffs in our local school districts and on our public college campuses.

<http://www.ed.gov/programs/statestabilization/guidance.pdf>

The union's position is that the state budget, as proposed on March 10, does not comply with the DOE guidance which was issued on April 1. Our hope is that the stabilization fund will restore the proposed state cuts to the Rutgers operating aid.

Please remember that our union contract is with Rutgers University and not with the State of New Jersey. We should not let media reports of the Governor's intentions with regard to state workers cloud our sound judgment on what is best for Rutgers, our members and our students. As you will recall, we negotiated our contract in good faith with the university administration. Indeed, all of our members took less in salary increases over these past two years so that the university could invest more into student instruction and campus facilities. On top of that, we also set aside a portion of our increases to create a

Faculty Development Fund that will increase the number of tenure track faculty at Rutgers. As members of the Alternate Benefit Program, we should also be reminded that our members' retirement investments have been struck particularly hard by this economic downturn.

I ask that you share as much or as little of this communication as you please with your faculty colleagues and departmental staff. I remain confident that we can advocate for state investment in Rutgers while preserving the integrity of our contract.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact me directly at lisa@rutgersaaup.org.

Sincerely,

Lisa C. Klein

Lisa C. Klein
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President, Rutgers AAUP-AFT