

## **Minutes of the Special Meeting of the SAS Faculty and Affiliates, October 15, 2020**

This meeting was via Zoom Webinar.

### *1. Call to Order*

Peter March called the meeting to order, thanking Mary Trigg for serving as Acting Faculty Secretary and Tom Stephens for serving as Parliamentarian.

### *2. Acceptance of the Agenda*

*3. Rules of Engagement and Procedures for Remote Meeting Forum:* (Thomas Stephens, Parliamentarian, Professor and Assistant Graduate Director, Department of Spanish and Portuguese) Tom Stephens welcomed staff members to the meeting and gave the rules that would be followed for the meeting. He stated that the Agenda is assumed as approved and described the ways the question and answer portion of the meeting would proceed.

*4. Discussion of University Finances:* (David Hughes, Vice President, AAUP-AFT and Professor, Department of Anthropology) David Hughes shared a set of slides. He reviewed the fact that the university's budget is \$4.4 billion, and noted that the university is running a surplus, which included a surplus of \$114 million in 2019. His slides highlighted the unrestricted spending of the university, and the ways monies are allotted. He argued that it is artifice to say there is a budget shortfall—there is a surplus of money that should be available for unexpected emergencies. He stated that the university's cash reserves have grown during COVID from \$60 million (conservatively) to \$180 million. He noted that the administration has projected a \$27 million shortfall for a fiscal year that has barely begun, and that the university has received money from various sources that has not been noted. He asked why not solve the deficit problem by saving surpluses from past years? He closed by sharing the SAS budget and recommending that the SAS administration protect the monies needed to run the school in various ways, including by taking personal salary cuts.

*5. The Impact of PTL Non-Rehiring:* (Andrew Goldstone, Associate Professor, Department of English and Amy Higer, President, PTLFC-AAUP-AFT) Amy Higer spoke on behalf of the PTL union. She stated that the Writing Program is one of the finest in the country, and that many PTLs have taught in the program for years, if not decades. Seventy experienced, writing instructors are slated to lose their positions, which will affect their livelihoods during a pandemic. She noted that PTLs only make up 1% of Rutgers' budget, and described the cost that students will pay if these layoffs occur. She believes this has been a top-down process, without conversations with those involved. She closed by thanking Dean March for listening, considering, and for his commitment to keeping long-term PTLs. She reiterated her belief that all of those laid off should be reinstated.

Andrew Goldstone noted that the laying off of staff members was harming centers, and the elimination of PTLs would influence the quality of student education. He asked why are faculty and staff being used to balance deficits caused by athletics, for example? Who will make decisions about priorities at Rutgers? He stated his belief that senior administrators should not meddle in departmental curricular decisions. Departments need to decide which faculty should teach which courses; efficiency cannot justify administrative involvement in curricular issues.

Andrew Goldstone then introduced a resolution and posted the link to the resolution in the Chat feature of the Webinar. He read the resolution, which is included as an addendum to the

meeting minutes. He called for seconds and many seconded. Parliamentarian Tom Stephens noted that the motion was made and sustained, and the resolution will be voted on by the faculty and will be made available as soon as possible after the end of the meeting.

*6.The Impact of Eliminating Positions:* (Christine O’Connell, President, URA-AFT) There was a technology glitch that did not allow Christine O’Connell to join the meeting. Although the conveners moved the meeting to the next topic, in the Q&A session Christine O’Connell’s remarks were made available and Andrew Goldstone read them. They are included in the appendix to these minutes.

*7.The School’s Plan for Eliminating Positions:* (Peter March, Executive Dean) Peter March welcomed everyone, and spoke about the impact of COVID on the current budget situation at the university and the school. There is a \$16 million deficit in SAS, which will become \$9 million if state funds are restored. This figure includes spending reductions that have already taken place and those projected to take place by the end of the fiscal year. He worked closely throughout the summer with department chairs, program directors, and SAS deans to develop strategy to address the budget shortfall. On September 30 Peter shared the strategy in a letter to chairs and directors, asking that it be distributed to faculty and staff in their units. The letter stated that the deficit could not be addressed without reducing personnel costs. The two that are under discussion today are the reduction of employment opportunities for some part time lecturers and elimination of some staff positions.

In terms of PTLs, the numbers needed in SAS are always less in the spring than in the fall. This is true for the English Department as well as other SAS departments. The writing program has hired 71 PTLs this fall and plans to reduce the number of upper-level sections offered in the spring (these courses will be staffed with full-time faculty and teaching assistants), preserving the curriculum while controlling costs. Peter March noted that after concern was raised about reduced availability of upper-level sections and the human cost of offering no sections to PTLs, the Writing Program decided to prioritize retaining the valuable expertise of veteran PTL instructors in introductory courses, while expanding the assignment of experienced NTT instructors to a greater range of upper-level courses. This allowed the Writing Program to offer remote teaching to 26 PTLs in the spring.

Regarding staff, Peter committed in his letter to examine staffing levels across the School to eliminate some staff positions without causing undue harm to operations. After consulting with deans and chairs, they identified a total of 22 positions that would be eliminated and met individually with each staff member affected. He noted that one position was vacant, one being transferred outside SAS, and two staff members (of the 22) have filed for retirement. Also, as part of a reorganization, five new staff positions are being created, and they expect staff members whose positions are being eliminated to be strong candidates to fill the new positions. University policies and procedures and negotiated labor agreements were followed throughout. He closed by noting the difficult place in which the pandemic has placed us, and his awareness of the human cost of losing a job and health benefits in a bad economy. While he appreciates the input that SAS chairs, directors and deans had in developing the budget strategy, he closed by stating that the responsibility for implementing the strategy rests with him alone.

*8.Question and Answer* (Mary Trigg, Acting Secretary, Associate Professor, Department of Women’s and Gender Studies) monitored questions on the Q&A feature of the Webinar, and recognized people to speak.

#1—Howie Swerdloff, Part-time Lecturer, the Writing Program at Rutgers University (former)

Howie stated that he had been dismissed with his PTL colleagues on September 25<sup>th</sup> and pointed to the emotional and financial impacts. He talked about the effect of PTL layoffs on students and suggested that Rutgers budget decisions are choices that are being made.

#2—Edward Castner Jr., Professor, Department of Chemistry and Chemical Biology  
Why is the SAS Dean continuing to try to move control of administrative functions away from departments? I thought the fact that this is a bad idea for multiple reasons this had been settled years ago. This seems like a power grab designed to reduce transparency, reduce faculty governance, and force administrative functions back onto the faculty. Just two examples where this will lead to negative consequences are grant preparation and budgeting, and IT management. I personally rely on the in-person interactions for preparation of grant proposal budgets and handling of grant funds. In the IT area: how many of us have suffered from the ‘ticket closed’ failure from SAS IT when the staff just close out the request when they are incapable of handling it? He noted a loss of transparency through the year.

Peter March responded that more transparency is good. He has tried to be transparent with center directors and others. He noted that sending the September letter to department chairs and the university community was an act of transparency. He stated that the locus of greatest authority over all matters at the university sits with the president and the Board of Governors.

#3—Paul Israel, Research Professor, Department of History and Director and General Editor, Thomas A. Edison Papers Project  
I would like time to speak regarding the impact of the layoff on my center. Paul Israel noted that his administrator was laid off. He expressed his feeling that the decision was made without understanding who will now manage this work.

Peter March noted that the difficult process for identifying staff positions that could be eliminated was undertaken by deans and chairs with the intent to minimize the operational impact to the School. Consideration of the staffing levels in each unit, the ability of other staff to divide up the duties of any targeted position, and seniority rules for any aligned personnel were part of the process.

#4—Andrew Goldstone, Associate Professor, Department of English  
Christine O’Connell has sent me her statement and asked me to read it for her.

See the Appendix for the full text.

#5—Karen Cerulo, Professor, Department of Sociology  
Can you respond directly to the figures presented by David Hughes? They paint a very different picture than you present.

Peter March responded that high-level budget decisions are not part of his purview. If he is involved in those discussions it is more on an informative level. What is under his purview is the SAS budget, as approved by the Board of Governors.

[The following 3 questions on centers were clustered]

#6—Carolyn Brown, Professor, Department of History  
I would like to speak on the impact of the loss of our single Program Manager at the Center for African Studies. We are now one of FOUR Centers serviced by one assistant. This will interfere

with our operations at a time when the University is launching a \$15m Mellon initiative to set up an Institute for the Study of Global Racial Justice. We host the African Studies Association - which I'm the incoming president of and Ousseina Alidou is the VP and we have serviced the university as well as the large African immigrant population throughout New Jersey. Not having a full coordinator will hobble our abilities to contribute to the Mellon project and make it hard for us to fulfill our purpose academically and to the state.

#7—Colin Jager, Professor, Department of English and Director, Center for Cultural Analysis  
I would like to speak about the layoffs at my center. Colin Jager noted that the CCA is also losing its administrator. He believes that the CCA adds a great deal to Rutgers University. Can Peter March advocate for reviewing these decisions?

#8—Stephane Robolin, Associate Professor, Department of English  
I would like to speak to the devastating staff cuts to Area Studies centers, and the Center for African Studies in particular, which ripple out to the entire RU system. Stephane Robolin spoke as the former director of the Center for African Studies. He said that he believes the decision to make one area coordinator for four centers shows a devaluation of Area Studies.

In terms of the three questions about centers, Peter March stated that these decisions were not made lightly or rashly. They were made thoughtfully, advisedly, and in consultation with chairs, directors and deans.

#9—Rob Scott, Associate Professor and Undergraduate Director, Department of Anthropology  
Will Dean March take a salary cut to preserve needed staff positions?

The Dean responded that it is not appropriate to discuss details of a specific person's employment in an open faculty meeting.

#10 Alexandra Walczak, Supervisory Laboratory Operations Coordinator, Rutgers Division of Life Sciences.  
Why after having state appropriations restored and an increased level of enrollment are we cutting the very PTLs and staff that support President Holloway's vision for our beloved community?  
How can we continue to excel at our jobs if we are in consistent fear of losing our jobs?

Peter March stated that PTL numbers vary from semester to semester and year to year. Over the past five years, they varied between 500 and 700. We're at the low end of the range this semester.

#11—Ana Pairet-Vinas, Associate Professor and Undergraduate Director, Department of French  
Will departments be affected? In that case when will departments be notified? What is the anticipated extent of staff reorganization? Can we expect departmental mergers? Should we expect additional staff layoffs?

Peter March replied that if we can stick to a plan and control expenditures, we should be able to not close centers or merge departments.

#12—Andrew Goldstone, Associate Professor, Department of English  
Why are permanent staff eliminations being made in response to a temporary situation? What aspects of this reorganization were in fact planned prior to the pandemic? If the motion carries, will you reinstate those who have been laid off?

#13—Rebecca Mark, Professor, Department of Women's and Gender Studies and Director,

Institute for Women's Leadership

Do we have a breakdown in terms of gender and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) status of those who have been laid off?

Peter March responded that he would get those numbers and make them available.

#13—Eriny Shenouda, Office Administrator, Cyberlearning Innovation and Research Center (CIRC) I'm a URA-AFT 1766 Member and I'm speaking on behalf of my union. My question is to Dean March: Could you reconsider your layoff decisions and work together with us to reach a compromise that benefits all parties and preserves the integrity of the school and the services we provide to our students?

Peter March responded that the original five year funding agreement for the Cyberlearning Innovation and Research Center (CIRC) has expired. He noted that CIRC has important assets, support services and personnel that are important to SAS. He suggests a reorientation of CIRC from innovating new technology to sustaining existing technology and integrating novel components with commercial products that are being used throughout the school and university. He said that this means dissolving CIRC as a formal center and integrating CIRC personnel into SAS IT, the SAS Office for Undergraduate Education, or specific departments, to the extent possible where there is need.

The meeting adjourned at 12:02.

Respectfully submitted, Mary Trigg, Acting Secretary of SAS