

December 17th, 2020

Dear Members of the URPC,

While sitting in on a meeting of CNRS ASCs this morning, listening to them try to figure out how to cover the administrative workload of the Biological Sciences department, we were struck by the contrast of our discussion on the Senate about the draft strategic plan. In particular, the section on *Employee Engagement & Success Goals 1 and 2* speak of retaining employees and work-life balance. Of course, none of us have balanced lives during a pandemic and we are all working harder right now than ever before. However, we believe that academic staff within our college are at a breaking point, and if not addressed adequately, will result in grave consequences for our college and the University's mission for student success.

Academic ASCs are the face of their departments. They are a critical element in student retention and departmental operation. Currently in CNRS, neither Wildlife nor Fishies Biology has an ASC (they shared one prior to a retirement) and Biological Sciences had both of its ASCs retire (only one position is being filled and will try to do the work of two people). To make up for this lack of personnel, our college has "pooled" its administrative staff to try to "cover" all of our programs. This model is extremely stressful for our staff as they already have full time jobs in their home department(s). They report routinely working outside of their contractual hours in order to provide basic support and morale is extremely low.

While looking at HSU's employment opportunities webpage, there are currently, zero tenure track faculty openings, 1 external posting for staff (though several pool postings and 1 internal posting) and 7 administrative postings. The salary and benefits of the lowest paid of these administrative positions would pay for 2 - 3 ASCs. On top of this, none of the 7 administrative positions are student-facing. How an organization spends its resources tells us about its values. Right now, it appears that we value administrative positions, several degrees removed from students, more than we do our critical staff members who work with students daily. Yes, HSU may have a disproportionate number of staff members for its size, however, that does not hold true for the academic staff. Academic ASCs and technical staff represent a small fraction of the total number of staff on campus and are drowning in workload. Such a displacement of duty is not tenable or fair.

As our campus considers its next strategic plan, taking steps to self-study for a Polytechnic designation and ensuring our future resiliency, we need to have conversations about which positions on campus are critical. Deciding which positions must be filled when there is a vacancy, and which can wait should follow the same principles as those adopted by the URPC. A student-first budget should begin by supporting those with direct contact with students and work its way out. We seem to be doing the opposite right now.

Sincerely,

Monty Mola, Chair of Physics & Astronomy

Bori Mazzag, Chair of the Departments of Mathematics and Computer Science

Steve Martin, Chair of Environmental Science and Management

Amy Spowles, Chair of Biological Sciences

Melanie Michalak, Chair of Geology

Sharon Tuttle, Program Lead of Computer Science

Elizabeth A. Eschenbach, Interim Chair Environmental Resources Engineering (Spring 2020)

Andrew P. Kinziger, Chair, Department of Fisheries Biology

Christine Cass, Chair of Oceanography

Daniel Barton, Chair, Department of Wildlife