



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
**Executive Office  
of the President**

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May 1, 2020

Dear Members of the Coalition for Academic Justice UA:

I sincerely hope you and your families remain safe and well during these challenging times. I also am profoundly grateful for your dedication and service to our University, our mission and our students.

I received your letter and accompanying petition regarding the University's recent process and decisions to help mitigate the significant financial impact of COVID-19. Your passion and your concern are evident in your words and supported by the many signatures of supporters. We value your input and we acknowledge that we can always do better in communicating and shared governance practices. The crisis now upon us demanded swift and decisive action, and while we obtained faculty and staff input as part of this process, we can always be more inclusive.

As you know from our communications throughout this crisis, including the University-wide email I sent to faculty and staff on Tuesday, the University faces a financial challenge unlike any other that we have witnessed in our lifetimes. Projections of losses are in the hundreds of millions of dollars and impact every aspect of our enterprise. There are no easy answers nor painless solutions. There are, however, two key guiding principles that have governed our decision-making process.

**Our People** The greatest asset that we have at our University is our people. Our students, our staff and our faculty make the University of Arizona a world-class institution and their work enriches lives for all. Throughout our discussions, our people were always first in our considerations. What impact would a personnel decision have on our employees and their families? How would a decision impact the student learning experience or faculty research? What is the fairest and most equitable of actions that would help protect the most vulnerable? I can assure you that our difficult decisions were made with the utmost compassion and respect for our people.

The Furlough and Pay Reduction Plan will be implemented to preserve jobs and to proportionately share the burden of sacrifice, with the highest earners making the largest financial contributions. It is meant to be an equitable and consistent plan to sustain our University now—and allow us to thrive in the future. Deliberate action means quicker savings which in turn means better opportunity to avoid deeper and more permanent cuts like layoffs. In addition, if current economic trends that we and other universities are relying upon turn out to be better than projected, we have the potential to adjust the plan.

That said, I certainly recognize and understand that there will be impacts on workloads and stress on all employees as we adapt to reduced workhours and incomes while seeking to sustain excellence in research, teaching and service across the institution. Our faculty, staff and students have adapted in immeasurable ways over the past six weeks and I am grateful to each and every one for their creativity, persistence and dedication in the midst of the pandemic.

**Collaboration and Transparency** Since the beginning of this unprecedented crisis, we have worked with representatives across the institution. As part of the Financial Sustainability Emergency Response

Taskforce, a Workforce Working Group was established to develop recommendations for possible furloughs and pay reductions. That Working Group includes key members of faculty and administration. The group has worked to create recommendations that help mitigate the financial cliff we are facing while attempting to lessen the impact on any one individual, and that included doing all they could to avoid layoffs.

Among the dozens of outreach and financial educational efforts undertaken by University leaders over the past month:

- On March 30<sup>th</sup>, we sent a University-wide email inviting faculty, staff and students to provide input to our Financial Sustainability Emergency Response Task Force.
- On April 6<sup>th</sup> at the Faculty Senate, I, along with the Provost, CFO and Senior Vice President for Research, Innovation and Impact presented and took questions regarding our financial challenges, and we made clear that furloughs and pay reductions could be possible recommendations.
- On April 15<sup>th</sup>, I, along with the Provost and CFO, met with the Strategic Planning and Budget Advisory Committee and provided a detailed presentation about our finances and discussed the potential of furloughs and pay reductions.
- On April 16<sup>th</sup>, Provost Folks shared with the Deans the summary of the furlough and pay reduction plan.
- On April 17<sup>th</sup>, we sent the campus-wide email with our furlough and pay reduction plan. That same day, more than 4,000 staff and faculty joined our webinar question and answer session.
- As noted in my email sent to all faculty and staff this past Tuesday, we began a series of virtual town halls for each College and each non-academic division this week. These town halls include me, the Provost and CFO and include detailed slides of our financial situation and our plan for recovery.

Importantly, since the high-level summary was provided to the campus on April 17<sup>th</sup>, we have received hundreds of truly helpful inputs regarding specific circumstances for consideration, allowing myriad analyses and ideas to be reviewed and the details of the plan to be developed. For that, too, I am deeply grateful to our community and want to reemphasize that the inputs are being thoughtfully considered.

As to some of the other questions or concerns raised in your letter, let me provide some clarity. First, the Intercollegiate Athletics Department is an integral part of the University and is included in the University-wide Furlough and Pay Reduction Plan, except for a handful of Athletics coaches with contractual obligations. Our Government and Community Relations staff has been working feverishly to secure federal and state financial assistance to help lessen the burden on our campus community. It is important to note that the \$3 trillion CARES Act provided \$14.25 billion to universities and \$31 million to the University of Arizona—with up to \$15.5 million available to the University directly and \$15.5 million going directly to our students. The state of Arizona is anticipating losses beyond \$1 billion outside of effects on the University—more than the AZ Rainy Day fund.

As we learn more regarding this support, we will share it. Finally, the comprehensive annual financial report, including the independent auditor's response for 2019, is available for your review online at <https://www.fso.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/2019-10/cafr2019.pdf>. The fiscal year 2020 report is not yet completed, as the year is ongoing. However, we will always welcome the opportunity to share with you the financial projections to date and what we expect to come in the next fiscal year.

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I look forward to continued collaborations with our faculty, staff, graduate and undergraduate students in the days and weeks ahead. We will seek your input and answer your questions as we face these challenges together.

Thank you for your continued commitment to the University of Arizona.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert C. Robbins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a blue ink color.

Robert C. Robbins, M.D.

President

The University of Arizona