COALITION FOR ACADEMIC JUSTICE

FACT SHEET

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CAJUA Background

The Coalition for Academic Justice UA was formed just days after UA President Robert Robbins announced on Friday, April 17, 2020 via campus-wide e-mail, the administration's draconian pay cut plan. A group of concerned faculty, staff, and graduate students quickly mobilized privately and then held its first public meeting, under the name CAJUA, via zoom on April 24, 2020. Over 200 people attended. The new organization took swift action by drafting an open letter opposing the pay cut plan. That letter/petition quickly garnered more than 2,500 signatures and was hand-delivered to the President's home. The letter stated:

"The most destructive budgetary contingency plan in the history of our university has been imposed overnight with insufficient review, input or collaboration by faculty, staff, or graduate students, those of us who actually serve the core mission of this university."

In less than three months, the CAJUA has grown to more than 500 registered members, with 700 on our listserv, and with vocal supporters throughout the country. We have had several key victories. The first involved pushing the administration to drop its original plan which would have entailed pay cuts and furloughs for *all* employees, even the lowest paid. The President responded with a revised plan, which had a floor of $44,500, but was still deeply problematic, not only because the floor was too low, but because it contained unrealistic gradations. The second big victory led to the pause of the administration's pay cut plan to give the rank-and-file staff, faculty and graduate students time to work collaboratively with the senior leadership team, in an effort to create a better and more comprehensive plan to address existing financial challenges.

In consultation with Professor Jessica Summers, Chair of the Faculty, as well as Executive Officers of the Faculty Senate, CAJUA s called for an unprecedented General Assembly, which convened on Thursday, June 25, 2020. There, CAJUA made a successful motion to put a vote before the General Faculty. The ballot was sent via email to the 3,513 voting-eligible faculty members during the meeting. Twenty-four hours later, the results came in, and they showed that 89% percent of those who cast ballots voted in favor of pausing the implementation of President Robbins's furlough and pay cut plan until *at least* mid-September, 2020. (Voter turnout among faculty was 41%, one of the highest in recent history). While the president did respond with a delay, it was only until August 10.

Reentry Concerns

The UA administration's current re-entry plan is driven by arbitrary and unrealistic calendar dates rather than by evidenced-based data and benchmarks, and involves a week by week "on ramp" that will result in 20,000 students returning to campus after Labor Day, on September 8. Public health experts insist that weekly staged-progression does not allow for sufficient time to assess whether the staged re-entry plan is working. As of August 3, there were no publicly stated health metrics associated with the President's plan. For this reason, College of Public Health professor, Dr. Joe Gerald, introduced a resolution at the Aug. 3, Faculty Senate meeting, to ensure that the university's phased re-entry plan include clearly stated public health metrics. The Faculty Senate is currently voting on that resolution.

The lack of transparency by the senior leadership about the reporting of cases and metrics is troubling. For example, despite there being over 70 cases among the "UA community," according to Campus Health, only three cases were reported in a recent New York Times article. Further, public health faculty investigating best practices for re-entry were put under a "gag order" under which they were prohibited by the Office of General Council from sharing their suggested health metrics with the UA community and the larger public. In the Faculty Senate meeting on Aug. 3, President Robbins claimed that he was unaware of this and he committed to making these metrics available to the public.

Financial Findings through the General Faculty Financial Advisory Committee (GFFAC)

Created on July 10, after the General Faculty vote to pause the administration's furlough/pay cut plan, the GFFAC was charged with working intensely with Chief Financial Officer Lisa Rulney over the period of three weeks to conduct an analysis and "deep dive" of university finances, and to develop a proposal to mitigate some or all of the anticipated losses associated with the pandemic. The 13-member committee consisted of faculty, graduate students, and staff from different units on campus, and worked for more than 120 hours conducting research and meeting with top administrators.

The GFFAC presentation on Aug. 3, at the Faculty Senate meeting outlined the history, process, and findings of the committee's work. Members found that there are short and long term borrowing options available which would mitigate the anticipated losses without cutting salaries and continuing with layoffs. They also reported the UA administration's rate of furlough is 4.4 times the rate of furloughs among our closest peers. The committee cautioned against potential "irreparable harm" that might be caused by salary cuts as suggested by their survey results in which 1,175 faculty and 2,816 staff responded. Over 38% of faculty and over 25% of staff responded that they were likely to seek out new employment due to the extreme furlough/pay cut plan.

Acquisition of Ashford University - UA Global Campus

Members of the Coalition for Academic Justice are deeply troubled by President Robbins's announcement on August 3, that the UA has made a deal to purchase Ashford University to create a "non-profit" corporation (UA Global Campus) that will share the University of Arizona name. According to President Robbins, the decision to create UA Global Campus was made after meetings with 200 or so individuals in top leadership positions at the university.

These meetings hardly indicate shared governance or the existence of a democratic process regarding a new venture that could result in a myriad of short, medium and long-term consequences for the 15,000 staff and

more than 3,300 faculty, who toil daily to keep the university afloat. It appears that UA students were also left out of discussions about the continued corporatization of this institution.

In the Aug. 3 Faculty Senate meeting, faculty senator, Leila Hudson stated that "Ashford is owned by Zovio, a for-profit company, and has been called 'the poster child of predatory recruitment practices.' What a shame that all governance processes were bypassed to enact this degrading partnership."

Further, the fact that those who were privy to details about the venture were forced to sign "non-disclosure agreements" before materials about the deal would be shared with them points to the leadership's unwillingness to be transparent with the rank-and-file faculty and staff at the university.

The acquisition is yet another recent example of how corporatized our university has become. The process through which the Global Campus is being created is indicative of the complete lack of shared governance at the UA. The two hundred or so individuals who were consulted, out of almost 15,000 employees (faculty, staff and students) does not reflect shared governance or inclusive leadership at a land grant public institution.

Wall-to-Wall Union

Our "wall-to-wall" union will be an organization that will be open to all employees who work at the university. On Thursday, July 30, the Coalition for Academic Justice at the University of Arizona, a broad based group of staff, student and faculty employees, voted overwhelmingly (96%) in favor of unionizing, affiliating as a local branch of the United Campus Workers in association with the Communication Workers of America. With this historic vote, the campus community at the UA will be backed by a permanent organization that collectively and publicly defends the values of our land grant university, with its public mission to educate more than 40,000 students, to use knowledge for the public good, and to treat its employees respectfully and collaboratively. These core values are undermined by the extreme austerity of the planned layoffs and furloughs, the recklessness of the current reentry plan, and the secretive decision to purchase a failed for-profit online college. There is no time like the present for a union to defend the future of higher education in Arizona. Our organization unites the campus community together around our shared values and mission. In solidarity with other academic unions across the nation, we stand ready to struggle for inclusive and democratic academic justice in our communities in Arizona. Our students, faculty, families, workers, and community deserve nothing less.

Speakers (in order of appearance)

Celeste González de Bustamante is an associate professor in the UA School of Journalism, affiliated with the Center for Latin American Studies and Mexican American Studies Department. She has a Ph.D. in history and is a member of the CAJUA Steering Committee.

Marcia Klotz, is an assistant professor in English and Gender and Women's Studies who focuses primarily on contemporary literature, film and theory. She is a member of the General Faculty Financial Advisory Committee and the CAJUA Steering Committee.

Leila Hudson, is an associate professor of Middle East and North African Studies. An anthropologist and historian by training, she works on Syria, the Ottoman Empire, media, conflict, and power in the contemporary Middle East.

Carol Brochin, is a teacher educator and associate professor in the College of Education. Carol is also a founding member of CAJUA and a member of the Steering Committee.

Ruth Oropeza, is a 6th year Ph.D. Candidate in the History Department. Ruth is a first-generation nontraditional student who advocates for student labor rights and speaks out against the exploitation of graduate student labor.

Debi Chess is the Executive Director of The Dunbar Pavilion: An African American Center for Art and Culture, and past UA College of Social and Behavioral Sciences Community Impact Fellow.

Kat Rodriguez is an alumnus of the University of Arizona, a mother, a spouse of a University employee, an immuno-compromised person, and a member of the Tucson community.

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