

COALITION FOR ACADEMIC JUSTICE



Press Release

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August 4, 2020

Failed UA Leadership Forces Coalition for Academic Justice to Take Steps to Create a Union

Tucson, Ariz., - After numerous unsuccessful attempts to work with senior leaders throughout the spring and summer, the Coalition for Academic Justice at the University of Arizona (CAJUA) will announce at a press conference on Tuesday, August 4, 2020 at 9 a.m., that it has voted to create a “wall-to-wall” union for UA employees, including staff, graduate students, and faculty. The unilateral decisions senior leaders have made indicate that they continue to prioritize finances over the health, livelihoods, and well-being of members of the campus and Tucson community.

Despite numerous warnings from experts from the UA College of Public Health and in Pima County, the UA president remains tied to his administration’s plan to bring 20,000 students back to campus and ramp up to in-person classes by Labor Day.

At an unprecedented three-hour Faculty Senate meeting today, which drew an audience of more than 800, senior leaders failed to justify their calendar-based re-entry plan. At the same time, a panel of public health experts from the Mel & Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health stated that the three-week “on ramp,” which will result in having 50% of all classes with some in-person component, is not sufficient time to evaluate how and if the plan is working.

At the same meeting, members of the 13-person General Faculty Financial Advisory Committee (GFFAC) delivered a compelling presentation about their research, findings, and negotiations with senior leaders. GFFAC was constituted in mid-July in response to CAJUA’s call for a historic faculty vote in which 89% of voters demanded to delay a draconian furlough/pay cut plan until at least September 8. Several members of the GFFAC, who are CAJUA members, voiced frustration over the senior leadership’s unwillingness to share data that repeatedly had been requested.

Finally, at the meeting, President Robbins admitted to having select faculty members sign “non-disclosure agreements” (NDAs) before they could see the details involving the acquisition of Ashford University and the creation of a “non-profit” corporation that will be called UA Global Campus. Jessica Summers, Chair of the Faculty

and one of those who signed an NDA, reported that she only learned about the Ashford University acquisition through President Robbins' campus-wide email on August 3. It is clear that faculty are extremely concerned about the consequences of this new campus and agreement and they are dismayed that only an elite group of faculty and a handful of staff were consulted about the venture.

Staff, graduate and professional students, and faculty grow more concerned about the future of the University of Arizona as it is clear that the senior leadership team persists in unilateral, top-down decision making, in ways that jeopardize the mission of our land-grant, Hispanic-Serving Institution: they failed to incorporate faculty and staff concerns in their reentry plan; they failed to fully engage with members of the GFFAC when they did not meet all requests for aggregate, granular data; and, they failed to include the rank and file faculty and staff in the decision-making process to create a "non-profit" corporation called UA Global Campus. For all of these reasons, the CAJUA has voted to move forward with the establishment of a local branch of the United Campus Workers in association with the Communication Workers of America.

The press conference will happen on the west side of Old Main on the University of Arizona campus.

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