



MONTCLAIR STATE
UNIVERSITY

University Senate

Resolution: Tackling Challenges Together

Approved by the University Senate April 2021

Montclair State University instructors, librarians, and staff have demonstrated their commitment to maintaining the University's strength and purpose from the start of the pandemic. Due to New Jersey State's mandate for remote learning and remote student services, they quickly learned new skills essential to meeting students' existing expectations while addressing their new and unique needs. In addition to these challenges, instructors were asked to serve more students per class, resulting in an expanded workload.

Concurrently, the University's leadership asked faculty, librarians, and staff to make financial sacrifices in response to the pandemic's financial burden. As a result, the union for faculty, librarians, and staff negotiated a furlough with the University to offset the economic hardship and to avoid layoffs in their unit. Unemployment benefits meant to soften the economic impact for employees resulted in burdensome phone calls and emails to the New Jersey Department of Labor's already overwhelmed system. Some furloughed employees have yet to receive unemployment claims. Moreover, they continued paying for healthcare during the unpaid period.

Montclair State University has long prided itself on its commitment to social justice and equality. In most instances, this commitment carries over to the University's respectful and equitable engagement with faculty, librarians, and staff. Yet, sacrifices made by faculty, librarians, and staff have been unevenly met across the University administration and managerial units. Furloughed university community members appreciated the public statement from President Cole last July where she committed to a 20% pay reduction. In the same announcement, she stated, managerial and administrative units were reduced by 10%, resulting in a higher workload for them. Some managers not affected by furlough have shared in the burden in other ways, such as loss of income from non-bankable vacation days, or voluntary contributions to university causes. It does, however, send a very particular message when leadership as a whole is not willing to lead by example and fully share the same fiscal sacrifices asked of others.

The University Senate wishes to express its disappointment with this lack of solidarity with the community. The University Senate hopes that in the future, all members of the community will share in spirit and practical consequences as decisions regarding pandemic recovery are made going forward. There are several ways going forward that the University leadership could demonstrate their unified commitment to shared sacrifice, such as adding days to furloughed employees' paid leave banks and covering their health benefits during unpaid time. Furthermore, it is crucial that when furloughs are negotiated with our union in the future, they be

equitably implemented across rank and job titles at the university. Solidarity and equality will be apparent when there is appreciation, open communication, transparency, shared governance, and a genuinely mutual sacrifice amongst all employees.