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**Reply-To:** UFA Communications <[UFAFACULTY-L@lists.umt.edu](mailto:UFAFACULTY-L@lists.umt.edu)>

**Date:** Wednesday, February 15, 2017 at 11:39 AM

**To:** "[UFAFACULTY-L@lists.umt.edu](mailto:UFAFACULTY-L@lists.umt.edu)" <[UFAFACULTY-L@lists.umt.edu](mailto:UFAFACULTY-L@lists.umt.edu)>

**Subject:** [UFAFACULTY-L] Important Meeting Announcement

Dear Faculty,

The Ask: Please do what you can to attend, and encourage others to attend, an all faculty meeting Tuesday February 21 from 4:00-5:30 in UC 331. This is not just another meeting. What we decide has significant implications for the future shape and quality of the University of Montana.

Background: Last week at Faculty Senate President Stearns laid out the broad outlines of her proposed Prioritization Process (see attachment). PP entails an evaluation of all that we do at our university, prioritizes the contributions and costs of programs, and makes recommendations about how to adjust so that we can live within our budgetary means.

As you are already aware, UM has experienced a sharp decline in enrollment. In an institution whose revenue is heavily dependent on student FTE, this has meant significant budgetary reductions. Much of this to date has been done through vacancy savings, cuts to staff and non-tenure track faculty, operating budgets, and postponing maintenance of all sorts. It is necessary to take stock of what we do and make some hard decisions, so that we can be more strategic in how we adjust to a smaller student body.

The Regents, the Commissioner's Office, President Stearns, and Provost Edmond have made clear that a PP is going to go forward on our campus. We as faculty, along with staff and students, have an important decision to make. The purpose of this meeting will be to present the options and solicit your feedback on how the UFA Board has decided, after much deliberation, we should proceed.

We want to emphasize that this is a recommendation from the UFA. If we do not get widespread faculty support for our preferred path through this difficult but inevitable PP, the UFA will limit our participation to ensuring the CBA is enforced. This demonstration of faculty support will require a vote of confidence for our proposal from Faculty Senate. In addition, we will not move forward with our recommended PP option if we do not get solid understandings and reassurances in writing from the Administration and quite possibly the Commissioner and the Regents that they will respect the results of our analysis.

Our Proposal: That faculty, staff, and students form a shared governance prioritization committee and take on both the responsibility and authority to make a series of recommendations about how we should reallocate priorities and budgetary resources. Administration would also be asked to participate on an ex officio basis. The committee would be selected through a consensus process of leaders from UFA, Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, and ASUM.

As we see it, there are really only two ways to go here. One is a refined version of what President Stearns proposed last week to senate, which is an admin-led process, in which shared

governance groups can weigh in but in which our influence is surely less. The other, we believe preferred path is for us to take the lead ourselves, assuming as stated above, that adequate assurances can be gained from higher ups that our findings would be the basis for any programmatic and administrative cuts and reallocations to be made. There has been significant criticism on the part of many of us that shared governance has been far from robust on our campus; it has been more rhetorical than real. PP presents a daunting challenge and we need to decide whether or not we are up to the task or whether we will choose to pass on this shared governance burden and opportunity. We believe that what is at stake here is not just the details of budgetary reallocations but also the future of shared governance itself. If we back away from this challenge, we are backing away from meaningful shared governance. For too long the budget cuts that have occurred at UM have been decided by a small group of administrators without meaningful involvement of the faculty. This is not the fault of administration alone as the faculty needed to step up and take ownership and responsibility for how to build the University of Montana for the future. We propose we now do that.

Faculty really needs to understand that cuts are coming no matter who leads the PP. We live in political realities that dictate that no amount of tuition increases or legislative action is going to prevent this. We must reduce the amount of our expenditures that goes to administrative, faculty, and staff salaries combined. Furthermore, we cannot nor should we continue to make “opportunistic cuts” or cut those that are the most vulnerable amongst us (staff, NTT faculty, non-tenured tenure track faculty). It is time to think systematically about the institution as a whole and to make the tough decisions. The only question is who is going to do it. We believe it is better if this is us.

So, please make a special effort to join us this Tuesday afternoon and encourage your friends and colleagues to do so also. In addition to discussing and debating this proposal, MEA-MFT President Eric Feaver will be in attendance to take questions and comments.

Paul Haber  
UFA President