

May 12, 2020

Dr. Jo Ann Rooney
Dr. Norberto Grzywacz
Mr. Tom Kelly

Dear President Rooney, Vice-President Kelly, and Provost Grzywacz:

Thank you for your recent communications to the faculty about Loyola's response to the Covid epidemic and the economic circumstances that it has created. We are gratified to learn of the option to extend probationary periods for tenure track faculty, and that financial austerity is beginning with pay cuts for the university's most highly compensated administrators.

This is surely an early chapter in what will be a long and difficult story for all of us. So we, the officers of AAUP Loyola, write this letter to urge you to adhere to the standards of shared governance that are widely practiced in academe, articulated in policy documents generated by such organizations as the American Association of University Professors and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, and embodied in many provisions of Loyola's faculty handbook. The ongoing challenges posed by the Covid epidemic only heighten the importance of adhering to these standards.

Our concern was raised by a decision to change admissions standards for M.A. programs made by the "Management Policy Command structure" and announced to Graduate Program Directors (apparently with no previous discussion, according to the complaints that we received) in an April 30th email from the Director of Graduate and Professional Enrollment Management. Perhaps the changes announced are necessary or even wise, but matters such as admissions requirements fall squarely in the realm of faculty oversight and ought not be promulgated outside of structures and practices of shared governance. The ["Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities,"](#) jointly formulated by the AAUP, The American Council on Education, and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, outlines principles of joint or shared governance in which the faculty exercises "primary responsibility" for decision-making on academic matters, including "curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction." It also

stipulates that “[w]ith regards to student admissions, the faculty should have a meaningful role in establishing institutional policies, including the setting of standards for admission.”

We hope that this decision does not become the model for making the hard choices that the university will confront over the coming weeks and months. A May 5th email message from Athletics Director Steve Watson indicates that “oversight of the University’s operations now falls in under the Management, Policy, Command (MPC group), which is led by Tom Kelly and consists of other University leaders. All University functions flow up through ‘Sections’ that are tasked with planning for current and future operations.” We are concerned that the new MPC structure is replacing normal processes of university governance and policy-making, as described in the faculty handbook, involving a Faculty Council, University Senate, and a structure of departments, schools, and deans.

The pattern of making important academic decisions outside the bounds of shared governance bodies predates this crisis and thus amplifies our concerns. The decision to offer retirement incentives for tenured faculty in the VTIP program this past fall, for example, had enormous implications for the undergraduate curriculum and for the viability of graduate programs. Yet department chairs, graduate program directors, and even deans had no role in formulating the program or ensuring that its impact on the university’s core academic mission could be gauged beforehand. Cuts made to international programming and English language instruction over the past several years were similarly made without any meaningful participation or evaluation of faculty involved in such programs. Such participation might have ensured that any retrenchments in this area would not have actually cost the university more money than they saved, [as seems to be the case](#). With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, engaging faculty—both individually and through their networks—will remain crucial to the continued success and viability of instructional, research, programmatic and student concerns at LUC.

Crises underscore, rather than weaken, the importance of shared governance. Painful decisions such as cutting academic programs, or furloughing or laying off faculty and staff, are not just fiscal decisions to be made by budget officers. They are also academic decisions, and their full impact on our core educational mission can be evaluated beforehand only with substantial faculty participation in policy-making. Shared governance concerns are not about reaching 100% consensus. Neither are they intended to slow down the decision-making process unreasonably. Involving faculty in difficult decisions leads to more widely supported outcomes,

and may, in fact, identify a variety of creative solutions. As the AAUP statement “On Institutional Problems Resulting from Financial Exigency” states:

There should be early, careful, and meaningful faculty involvement in decisions relating to the reduction of instructional and research programs. The financial conditions that bear on such decisions should not be allowed to obscure the fact that instruction and research constitute the essential reasons for the existence of the university. Given a decision to reduce the overall academic program, it should then become the responsibility of the faculty to determine where within the program reductions should be made.

We ask the administration to inform faculty of their role within the new “Management, Policy, and Command” group and to explain the relationship between this new structure and the regularly constituted university bodies and lines of authority.

Crises are moments of truth for individuals, institutions, and entire societies. They can bring people together or pit them against one another. The mechanisms of shared governance provide a means by which we might all work together to steer Loyola University Chicago through this difficult time.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Johnson, History
Ian Cornelius, English
Devorah Schoenfeld, Theology
Rhys Williams, Sociology
Sherrie Weller, English
Elizabeth Coffman, Communication
David Ingram, Philosophy
Abby Annala, Library
Reuben Keller, IES
John Pincince, History
Alec Stubbs, Philosophy
Paige Warren, English