

California Faculty Association Questions Regarding Furlough

Background

The California Faculty Association (CFA) and the California State University have met several times to discuss the university's proposal to implement a two day a month furlough for Unit 3 employees. At their meeting on June 25, the CFA asked the CSU to respond to eight specific questions they had on the furlough proposal. The CSU was ready to respond to those questions on June 26th, but at CFA's request, the discussion was delayed until June 29th.

The following is a summary of the questions posed by the CFA, and the responses provided by the CSU:

Q1: Would the CSU be willing to allow faculty to choose their own furlough days in order to best maintain the quality of student instruction?

A: The CSU would be willing to work with the CFA on a system that would allow faculty to nominate their own furlough days through consultation with their Chair and/or Dean.

Q2: Can the CSU provide some guarantee, or propose some other measurable means, to ensure that the salary cost savings generated by a furlough are applied towards maintaining Unit 3 positions over the next 12 months, and that the savings generated will not be used to fund "pet projects" on individual campuses?

A: It is inaccurate and misleading to consider the effect of a furlough as a "salary savings" that can be used to fund one thing over another. A furlough works to reduce campus compensation expenses. The general funds available to campuses remain the same, but a furlough means that this fixed amount of money can be stretched to fund more positions than would otherwise be the case if there was no furlough. A furlough would not create a pool of additional income. If adopted by all employees, furloughs would reduce the CSU's salary expenditures by approximately \$275 million. But, the total budget cut for 2009-10 is \$584 million, and other cost saving options are being discussed to address the remaining deficit.

The Chancellor has said repeatedly that one of the main advantages of the furlough is that it will allow the campuses to maintain more jobs with the reduced General Fund allocations that they will now receive. His guiding principles in managing the budget deficit have been to "serve as many students as possible without sacrificing quality, and to preserve as many jobs as possible."

However, and in response to the specific question posed by the CFA, the CSU is prepared to say that it cannot provide any guarantees as to the precise number of Unit 3 positions that would be saved by a furlough, but it can guarantee that with the furlough in place, there would be more Unit 3 positions in 2009-10 than there would otherwise be without one.

Q3: Would CSU agree to meet with CalPERS to look at what support may be available to impacted faculty?

A: Yes. The CSU would be willing to send a representative to meeting with CalPERS as requested.

Q4: Would the CSU be willing to discuss proposals in relation to (1) allowing faculty to take a year off from FERP without affecting their FERP eligibility; (2) leaves of absence with health benefits; (3) leaves of absence and (4) the contractual pre-retirement reduction in timebase program?

A: Yes. The CSU would be willing to discuss all of these proposals subject to the constraints of the law and/or CalPERS regulations.

Q5: Would the CSU be willing to work with the Academic Senates to amend the RTP process so as to provide junior faculty with the option to elect to have an extra year inserted into the RTP cycle where they believe that their professional development has been adversely affected by budgetary constraints and/or reductions?

A: The CSU would be willing to consider these options in cases where we determine that faculty have been adversely affected.

Q6: Would the CSU consider relaxing the 125% rule given that a 1.0 timebase will only reflect 90% of regular salary?

A: Yes, the CSU would be willing to look at amending the current limitation to allow a faculty member to engage in additional employment that is equivalent to 125% of their base salary, or 125% of their timebase, whichever is the greater.

Q7: When will the finalized plan to deal with the budget be made public?

A: A plan will be announced on or about July 21 after the Board of Trustees meets and regardless of whether or not there is a state budget in place.

Q8: Will MPP's face the same type of reductions as the faculty?

A: The Chancellor has said that all groups will be equally affected by a systemwide furlough and that equity between employee groups is one of the benefits of the systemwide furlough option. However, the reality is that the CSU will have to go through a process of adapting itself to fit the level of funding that has been appropriated to it by the state. Within this process there can be no guarantees that all employee groups will be equally impacted at precisely the same time, or in precisely the same way, as the CSU goes about this difficult, but essential, process of adaptation.