



United Faculty and Academic Staff
P.O. Box 260323 • Madison, WI 53726-0323

United Faculty and Academic Staff (UFAS) is a labor union democratically organized to represent its members—faculty and academic staff at both the UW-Madison and UW-Extension. UFAS is an independent affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, Local #223, AFL-CIO

December 10, 2018

President John Robert Behling
Office of the Board of Regents
1860 Van Hise Hall
1220 Linden Dr.
Madison, WI 53706

Dear Mr. Behling,

I am writing to you on behalf of United Faculty and Academic Staff (UFAS), American Federation of Teachers Local 223, AFL-CIO. Established in 1930, UFAS is a democratically organized labor union for faculty and academic staff at the University of Wisconsin–Madison and University of Wisconsin-Extension. The membership of UFAS voted to approve this letter at the union’s general membership meeting on December 10, 2018.

As you know, UW System has appointed a task force to review SYS Policy 102, “Monitoring Low-Degree-Producing Academic Degree Programs” to “Create a new policy for monitoring low-degree-producing academic degree programs that has clearly defined criteria, monitoring thresholds, and a means to eliminate programs that do not meet expectations.” UW System has requested comment on the proposal and, despite the continued disdain that UW System and the Board of Regents have shown for shared governance, our membership has summarized below several serious concerns about SYS 102. However, we wish to emphasize that an individualized comment process such as this one is an inadequate substitute for shared governance and collective bargaining.

To begin with, faculty and staff at the local level—not System administration—are best qualified to make curricular decisions, including decisions about program closures. These decisions should be based exclusively on educational considerations and made through established shared governance processes that rely on and trust the professional expertise of faculty and staff. Coming on the heels of previous changes that undermined tenure, policies like SYS 102 that continue to erode shared governance make it even harder to attract and retain the best faculty and academic staff.

Moreover, this proposal shows a complete and utter lack of understanding of the educational process in suggesting that the value and productivity of a program can be determined by one single metric, “Number of graduates awarded degrees in a given period of time.” Shuttering low-enrollment programs based solely on the number of degrees produced gives students less freedom of choice, ensures that UW System campuses are not competitive with other peer institutions, discourages collaborative teaching across programs and departments within each UW System campus, and results from the Board of Regents and UW System Administration’s austerity politics that are driving program closures elsewhere in the UW System. We are concerned that these closures have disproportionately targeted the humanities,

social sciences, and liberal arts, which teach students the valuable communication and critical thinking skills they need for their future careers and democratic citizenship alike. In short, the proposed policy's narrow metric is antithetical to the Wisconsin Idea. At a minimum, we urge you to consider the alternative measurements of program productivity proposed on November 13, 2018, by faculty representatives to UW System.

Our concerns have been echoed by faculty and staff across the state, including by the UW–Madison Faculty Senate's "Resolution on UW System Draft Policy 102: Section Program Productivity Monitoring" (Faculty Document 2788). UFAS members look forward to the day that the Board of Regents and UW System Administration recognize and validate the professional expertise of the people who work every single day to educate students from around the world in the state of Wisconsin. We especially look forward to working with your successor through shared governance to ensure that UW System continues to offer those students a world-class education. In the meantime, we urge you to reject the proposed policy in its present form.

Respectfully, _____

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chad Alan Goldberg". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Chad Alan Goldberg
Professor of Sociology, University of Wisconsin–Madison
President, United Faculty & Academic Staff, AFT Local 223