

Dear Chancellor George,

July 2016

We hope your summer is going well. As you are aware, there is a movement on campus for the formation of a faculty union. Several supporters of this initiative have come to your office today in order to reach out to you as our potential and natural partner in ensuring that our legal right to organize is recognized, not as a threat to the university, but as an opportunity. We believe this affords us an opportunity to create greater equity and job satisfaction on this campus so that we can better execute our duties and fulfill our responsibilities to our students and the larger community, building on the record UMSL has already achieved in the region and state.

We at UMSL have together come through another exciting and extremely difficult year. Particularly given the budget difficulties that are our current reality, we, the faculty, want to emphasize our continuing commitment to the stellar teaching, rigorous research, and impactful service that have established UMSL as the premiere urban, land grant university in the state. We will continue to work hard to increase enrollment and retention as a pathway to UMSL's financial stability and it is our desire to partner with the administration in finding further solutions to current and future difficulties.

However, we have all felt the pressure brought on by the hiring freeze, which has decimated many departments and programs. Workloads for tenured, tenure-track, non-tenure track and adjunct faculty are exploding. Job security, support for professional development, benefits and retirement plans, and support staff are disappearing. At the end of the day, it is the students seeking the education they deserve who suffer.

We recognize that budget cuts will mean pain. However, this budget crisis has left us deeply concerned, not just about funding, but about our capacity as an institution to address long-term issues in an effective and collaborative manner that will ensure UMSL's continued success. "Shared governance" is an oft-heard byword on campus. However, when it comes to hard decisions, it seldom seems to become anything more than that.

In the face of these challenges, many of us have concluded that the most effective way to respond to these crises as educators who care about their institution is to establish a collective bargaining unit that can speak for all faculty. The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) represents faculties at a number of universities both public and private. We are partnering with them in order to confirm our vital role in promoting quality public higher education and citizenship at UMSL.

Imagine the progress we can make if all of our voices, faculty and administration together, can be heard by the state legislature to advocate for greater state support of UMSL and its students.

We invite you to stand with us in this effort. Perhaps even more importantly, we ask you not to stand against us. The legal right to organize, and the legal obligation on the university to provide for a fair and prompt process for union formation and recognition are non-negotiable. But beyond this legal right, there is a moral obligation on behalf of the administration not to use the power it has been granted, or abuse the public trust that comes with administering a public institution, by engaging in tactics that sow distrust and misinformation about these legal rights.

We are deeply disappointed in the confrontational language of the letter that was recently circulated. We have embarked upon these efforts to exercise our rights in utmost respect for the institution, and out of the deepest appreciation for the free will of its members to make their own autonomous decisions about representation. These efforts have now, without a shred of evidence, and prior to engaging in discussion with the faculty supporting the union, been publicly disparaged as deceptive and misleading by boilerplate anti-union language.

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According to the Missouri Supreme Court, it is the responsibility of administration and the Board of Curators to establish the policy and procedures for faculty members to organize. It is our hope that UMSL and the board will quickly craft and approve this process, so that we can work together to avoid any disruption for our fellow faculty and our students. We believe that following the well-established set of guidelines laid out for other employees in the National Labor Relations Act allows for the fairest establishment of an equitable and timely election process.

We ask that you follow the guidelines set forth in the NLRA, and create a fair process with the same conditions that most American employees are able to access:

1. the right to file for a union election with 30% support
2. an election administered by a neutral 3rd party
3. voting via a mail-in ballot

It is our sincere collective hope that the administration will work with us from the beginning of this process, and engage the faculty in a productive partnership.

Sincerely,

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