



April 22, 2020

Dear President Alger,

The James Madison University AAUP chapter recognizes the unprecedented nature of the pandemic and appreciates the hard work and efforts of everyone on campus to keep faculty, staff, students safe and connected. Faculty and administrators are in this together. That is precisely why we need to act in concert.

Our chapter is writing to you to express concerns about the decision-making process regarding pandemic-related budget cuts. Given the faculty's pivotal role in the mission of the university, it is appropriate that faculty have a significant say in these decisions. As faculty have expressed similar concerns to us, we write with the hope and expectation that you and the rest of the administration will welcome our participation.

As many colleges and universities (including the sixteen Virginia colleges and universities whose AAUP chapters we are working with) face an uncertain post-pandemic future, this is a good time for everyone in American higher education to (re)read the principles that AAUP stands for and that JMU defends.

The AAUP's 1966 *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities* (<https://www.aaup.org/report/role-faculty-budgetary-and-salary-matters>) makes clear that the faculty has central responsibility for all areas of the curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction. Further:

The allocation of resources is central in the formal responsibility of the governing board, in the administrative authority of the president, and in the educational function of the faculty. Each component should therefore have a voice in the determination of short- and long- range priorities, and each should receive appropriate analyses of past budgetary experience, reports on current budgets and expenditures, and short- and long- range budgetary projections. The function of each component in budgetary matters should be understood by all; the allocation of authority will determine the flow of information and the scope of participation in decisions.

We expect that the administration and Board of Visitors would welcome substantial representation of the faculty on all committees and task forces responsible for making budget decisions.

An April 15th *Update on JMU's Financial Situation* (signed by five administrators but no instructional faculty members) notified faculty of the existence of a contingency planning task force co-chaired by Provost Coltman and Senior VP Charlie King. That task force "has already

met and is developing several scenarios for consideration to allow for continued university operations during this public health crisis." In response to this announcement, we have the following questions:

Have instructional faculty been included in the work of that task force?

Which other task forces or bodies have decision-making responsibility? Who are their members? How were those groups constituted?

Were faculty members (if any) on these bodies elected or appointed? Which tools were used to insure diversity?

How is the administration ensuring that accurate and complete budgetary information is being communicated to every faculty member?

It is our expectation that faculty will be full participants in decisions that will so dramatically impact their futures and the future of the university.

Mr. President, we respectfully request a prompt response to the questions in this letter and suggestions for procedures that will guarantee the faculty's full participation in these critical decision-making processes.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Polanz", with a large, sweeping flourish extending from the end of the signature.

Dr. Dorothee Polanz

President, JMU chapter American
Association of University Professors

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CC: Heather Coltman, Provost
Donna Harper, Secretary of the Board
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