

Faculty Senate Chair Cecilia Maldonado's remarks

Faculty Senate Meeting, Feb. 15, 2011

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Colleagues,

I'm saddened by the news that President (Neal) Smatresk delivered to us today. Truthfully, I'm angry and sick of ignorant, idealistic, only-concerned-with-their-career politicians and their constant attack on higher education, and at what the public think are our fat salaries and our easy living — never making an effort to better understand and explain to the public the true value of higher education. I'm sick that the message — which is: "that the cornerstone to economic diversification is higher education" — doesn't seem to resonate and that such explanations simply fall mostly upon deaf ears.

I'm sick of living in a state that does not value education and uses the rhetoric of its value to pass budgets rather than to solve our long-standing problems. I'm sick that we never seem to learn our lessons, but rather we keep making the same mistake, even though research has already shown what works and other states have already learned from these same mistakes. I'm sick of reacting to budgets by cutting rather than solving the obvious problem with our tax structure. I'm sick that we are destroying much of what we have built. I'm sick that this state, so rich of opportunity to lead the nation in many areas, refuses to acknowledge the few "gems" which exist and feel that burning it down will have no consequences. Consequences, such as the cost of brain drain; of knowledge workers leaving their jobs and leaving organizations crippled because no succession planning has occurred. Consequences such as the inability to recruit bright, talented faculty in the future. Consequences such as the inability and failure to keep young, talented students in the state because our institutions of higher education are becoming less attractive!

Colleagues, I'm sick to realize that this discussion has been taking place for much longer than my residency here. I recently did a search on one of our library's databases using the keywords, "economic diversification and education." This is what I learned: that the Review Journal came up more than any other publication in my results; and, I stopped reading when I pulled up an article from 1993, whose message was the same — "don't cut higher education because of its value to economic diversification." At this time I ask, are we capable of solving our problems in the state?

Having said all of this, I believe it is incumbent of us to challenge the Chancellor and Board of Regents that NSHE look at efficiencies at the system level where vertical cuts must begin!.