



April 20, 2020

Dear President Drake, Provost McPherson, and Vice Provost Moore:

The Ohio State University has made laudable strides to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, especially through the Time and Change strategic plan and its aligned efforts. Yet experience tells us that many organizations inadvertently sacrifice these goals in the face of a significant financial crisis. As senior leaders respond to the budgetary challenges associated with COVID-19, The Women's Place and the President and Provost's Council on Women (PPCW) encourage you to commit to innovative strategies that will avoid undue and disproportionate implications for precariously situated and minoritized populations on campus, including women, people of color, graduate students, fixed-term instructors, and entry-level and hourly staff.

To date, Ohio State leadership has not announced the possibility of reductions to personnel. Instead, disaster leave policies have helped to retain a range of employees and their valuable contributions to the university. We ask that leaders maintain such practical and inclusive approaches moving forward. If budget changes are made following apparently "neutral" approaches, such as "last hired/first fired" or by eliminating entire categories of positions without attention to the demographics of the people who typically hold these roles, we stand to lose diversity in our university community. Even apparently equal cuts across all units (e.g. 10%) will have disparate impacts on units with higher numbers of individuals from vulnerable groups.

Budget decisions that explicitly recognize differences between units and between types of employees are more likely to maximize Inclusive Excellence as well as other strategic goals. Designing contingency budget planning with long-term diversity in mind positions the university for future success – and not mere survival – and is more likely to gain the support of the university community and external stakeholders.

Grounded in Ohio State's core values and informed by the [United Nations'](#) Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women, we encourage leaders to be guided by the following values and recommendations:

1. Charge the Fiscal Committee of the University Senate with establishing a set of guiding principles for an inclusive budget to maintain established channels of shared governance in decision-making.
2. Include ample representation of women and people of color in budget planning and decision-making, including on the Post-Pandemic Task Force. As recommended by the United Nations, apply a gender lens to contingency budget planning to recognize the disproportionate impact that COVID-19 may have on women and other precariously situated individuals. Studies and projections that disaggregate data by gender and race may better show how COVID-19 recovery plans can protect and advance these populations.



3. Maintain the well-being of Ohio State's people – students, staff, and faculty– as the priority. Long-term retention of students, staff, and faculty contributes to the fiscal health and cultural diversity of the university.
4. Continue to center inclusive excellence and communicate this value in instructions to unit leaders making budgetary adjustments. Flat, uniform cuts across units may appear to be “fair,” but will not be equitable.
5. Ensure that services or resources eliminated or reduced by a cut can be provided elsewhere at the university.
6. Make temporary measures explicitly temporary by establishing time limits. Establish benchmarks for re-evaluating longer-term changes.

Sincerely,

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