

April 11 Open Letter to President Hopkins and the Board of Trustees



To President David Hopkins and the Wright State University Board of Trustees:

In light of what has been happening at our University, the weekly e-mails we receive from President Hopkins paint a picture that bears little resemblance to reality. The former Provost has been on paid leave for nearly a year. Now we are told there is a major budget crisis. Yet, thus far and in typical fashion, the administration has directed the deans to plan for an 8% budget cut but otherwise has not shared any substantive information.

If the administration had bothered to share financial information in a meaningful way, perhaps the alleged crisis could have been averted. Instead, the administration spent years talking about budgetary transparency and MDA (and

our magnificent salt barn!) All the while, apparently none of the extraordinarily well-paid administrators was minding the store and the Board was paying no attention. Year after year, now-departed Vice President Polatajko delivered a dog and pony show in his annual budgetary presentation to the Board, reported that we were spending money on new initiatives, and gave no hint that a budgetary storm was coming. What has been the return, monetary or otherwise, on our new initiatives? Apparently, not enough to offset the supposed financial crisis that has prompted the administration to ask the Deans to submit plans for 8% cuts in their colleges.

Several million dollars have been budgeted on a branding campaign. The administration disseminated a new logo, realized it looked like the logo for a local recycling company, and withdrew it. Of course, branding is supposed to be about more than just a logo. But have there been any tangible returns on our investment? We are confident that Wright State's reputation is at a long-time low, branding campaign notwithstanding.

Millions have been spent on a consultant, and that in turn prompted the Ohio Speaker of the House — one of our alumni no less — to announce publicly that House members should use caution when dealing with Wright State. Clearly there were *negative* returns for that expenditure.

Millions are spent subsidizing intercollegiate athletics, when there is no evidence that students come to Wright State for athletics. In fact, in a recent survey, playing sports was the least significant reported factor in recruitment of students. Of course, the real test would be to ask our students whether they would rather have their tuition decreased by \$500 a year or keep intercollegiate athletics. Meanwhile, the administration routinely allows intercollegiate athletics to overrun its already swollen budget. If *that* is not bad enough, a million dollars was spent building a football field so that a few male students would have a fancy venue for their games when 58% of our students are female. To top it off, the Athletic Director was allowed to fire the men's basketball coach, who had two years left on his contract. So now we will be paying someone else for two years for doing absolutely nothing!

Millions have been spent on stipends, which is not surprising since WSU has over thirty individuals whose title includes president or provost (e.g., vice president, associate provost) and over forty whose title includes dean, many receiving stipends in addition to their base salaries. Why do we need so many administrators, and why do many of these individuals receive stipends when they are already among the highest paid employees at the University?

The administration and the Board have taken on a multimillion dollar liability to hold a Presidential debate at Wright State. If the massive funding needed does not materialize, how many employees will have to be furloughed? How many students won't be able to take the classes they need to graduate?

Meanwhile, faculty and students — the heart of the University — suffer the consequences for these gross failures of leadership. Even more troubling than the firing of the basketball coach, the former Provost sits at home collecting a very substantial salary, and we still don't know whether the reasons for his suspension are only *apparent* misdeeds, or will actually be subject to prosecution as federal felonies, or something in between. All the while we raise tuition, and our students go deeper and deeper into debt. We admit students who we know have virtually no chance of academic success but take their money anyway, while offering almost no need-based scholarships. Our most distinguished faculty are awarded modest raises and ordered to stop printing handouts that might help those students.

It is time to come clean with the University community before we are forced to redesign our logo again to show the Wright Flyer crashing into the ground.

Very soon, you will receive recommendations from us regarding cuts in expenditures that can be made without imperiling the academic core of the University.

But in the meantime, *we have questions.*

Who is responsible for the alleged financial crisis, and will anyone be held accountable? What is its real magnitude? What are its causes? Is the alleged

shortfall due to overly optimistic estimates of revenue, or is it simply the result of out of control expenses?

Specifically:

Even if the reported financial problems are due in part to continuing reductions in state support, why have the problems been allowed to accumulate to the point where planning for an 8% reduction in the college budgets is *suddenly* necessary?

How much has Wright State spent investigating the H-1B visa scandal? The investigation by the administration has dragged on for more than a year while the University's reputation has been dragged through the mud.

Why is Wright State one of only two state universities whose audits for 2015 have yet to be posted on the Ohio Auditor's website?

Where are the Trustees? Has the Board exercised its fiduciary responsibility at all? How many Board members have benefited from the issuance of H1-B visas or nepotism?

What is going on at WSRI? We keep seeing statements about the millions in research dollars that WSRI and our consultants are bringing into the University, and yet our Carnegie ranking has dropped and each year the University continues to provide millions of dollars to subsidize WSRI.

And to repeat questions we raised above: What returns have we realized from our new initiatives? From the branding campaign? From our expenditures on consultants? From millions poured into intercollegiate athletics? And why does WSU have so many administrators, and of them why do so many receive stipends in addition to their salaries?

The faculty demand transparency and accountability, now.

Martin Kich

President, AAUP-WSU

On Behalf of the AAUP-WSU Executive Committee



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I am a Professor of English at Wright State University, where I have been a faculty member for almost 25 years. I serve as the president of the WSU chapter of AAUP, which now includes two bargaining units, as the vice-president of the Ohio Conference of AAUP, and as a member of the executive committee of AAUP's Collective Bargaining Congress. As co-chair of the Ohio Conference's Communication Committee, I began to do much more overtly political writing during the campaign to repeal Ohio's Senate Bill 5, which would have eliminated the right of faculty to be unionized. [View all posts by martinkich](#)



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I thought on “April 11 Open Letter to President Hopkins and the Board of Trustees”



Phillip R. Winkler

April 15, 2016 at 3:44 pm

Prof. Kich, I disagree with most of your political views, I do, however, find that we have common ground in the budgetary arena . Among common view points/questions are, “gross failures of leadership”, “What is going on at WSRI?”, “Why do we need so many administrators, and why do many of these individuals receive stipends when they are already among the highest paid employees at the University”, “Millions are spent subsidizing intercollegiate athletics, when there is no evidence that students come to Wright State for athletics” President Hopkins paint(s) a picture that bears little resemblance to reality”. I do not agree that each

college budget should not be cut by a minimum of 8%. I do believe that 8% should be a starting point for the efficiency improvement required to make WSU available to the masses once more.

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