

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

The Dog Days of Summer



LINDA MOORE

Well folks, May and June have been exhausting, scary, angry months and we aren't through the pandemic or the protests. A fog of depression has descended over many of us. I am in contact with several TCU groups protesting or naming concerns about safety, transparency, Black Lives Matter, cuts

in benefits and budgets and the future of the university. TCU opens fully on August 1. The new fall schedule begins on August 17 and ends on November 24 ([**CLICK HERE to learn more**](#)). We are in Phase II of opening with strategies for safety, yet Covid cases in Texas are on an upward trajectory. Many staff are ending one semester and beginning another amid fear that opening too early will be dangerous and without specific clarity for those who are vulnerable or who live with someone who is.

Recent correspondence from HR indicates that the retiree health care benefit will be reduced to \$225 per month (\$2,700 annually) on January 1, 2021. Retirement benefits for current and future staff will be reduced from 11.5% to 8%. Originally this was only for new hires but now will affect all employees and, according to the Chancellor in the recent town hall, will be permanent. The 2021 operating budget will be reduced by 20%. This includes the TCURA budget. TCURA is represented on the University Compensation Advisory Committee (UCAC) and that committee's recommendations were, in many cases especially regarding retirement benefits, ignored. As a result, the Faculty Senate and the Staff Assembly developed a statement of concern about the transparency of process and the lack of information sharing. (See Special Statement on Page 2.) The TCURA

Executive Committee submitted a statement in support of their report (see below inset).

As a board, we are concerned about shared governance, and are committed to staff and faculty both present and retired. We are committed to working continuously for the university and for our membership as we have over the past decade in regards to changes/cuts in health care benefits. We are concerned that Covid-19 is being used to explain/excuse behaviors

Continued on Page 2

TCURA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE STATEMENT

The Executive Council of the TCU Retirees Association (TCURA) strongly supports the statement of the Executive Committees of the TCU Faculty Senate and TCU Staff Assembly regarding the recent cuts of benefits, ostensibly as a result of the recent pandemic. Our representation on the University Compensation Advisory Committee (UCAC) involved us in the deliberations of the past several years and knowledge of the processes that we believe should be maintained during decision-making. We also understand that many of the changes were introduced prior to the pandemic and rejected by UCAC. We are concerned that the rationale for cuts is unfounded based on the timeline of the discussion. We support more transparency and open discussion prior to decision-making.

****If you wish to support the above as an individual, [CLICK HERE](#) to view a petition that you can sign.**

DOG DAYS OF SUMMER*Continued from Page 1*

including what appear to be some poor financial decisions resulting in a large amount of debt for buildings on campus and the refusal of sorely needed money for students and academic resources. We are concerned that promises, even those made in writing, are being bypassed in the name of fiscal concerns. We also support the concerns of many students, alumni, staff and faculty that Black Lives Matter issues are not being addressed in a straightforward manner relating

to the history of the institution and its legacy as well as programmatic choices today.

The following comment is found on correspondence from the administration. "We will respect, honor and value each person on this campus because inclusion is a defining hallmark of our culture." TCURA wants to ensure that this remains so in all areas of the university including decision-making and programming. People on this campus are being excluded. People are disappointed, sad and scared for the future. We must remain focused on the best we can be and how each of us can contribute. We may be old, but we're not done yet! Stay safe!

SPECIAL STATEMENT REGARDING CUTS TO EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES OF THE FACULTY SENATE AND STAFF ASSEMBLY

We, the Executive Committees of the Faculty Senate and the Staff Assembly, are committed to helping ensure the continued success of Texas Christian University. We acknowledge the incredible burden that the current global crisis has taken on the university. The presumed financial stress on the university budget, necessitating dramatic reductions in spending all across campus, is of particular concern. We understand and appreciate that the unprecedented 20% reduction to the university budget is large, in part, as a means to preserve the jobs of those employed by the university. We truly thank the university for these efforts to prevent layoffs and furloughs.

However, we are extremely concerned with the manner in which cuts to employee compensation were made. The matter of reducing benefits was a contentious topic of discussion for the entirety of the previous academic year.

The University Compensation Advisory Committee (UCAC) spent considerable time and effort to reimagine what the employee benefits package might look like and presented the Chancellor with a list of recommendations in early March. These included the addition of short-term disability, paid-family leave for all employees, and a cap on retirement contributions for the top wage earners at the university. Additionally, the Faculty Senate endorsed a resolution at the same time that called for any cuts to employee compensation to be debated and discussed first by the Senate prior to implementation.

While many of the recommendations from UCAC were adopted by the Board of Trustees, the decision to reduce retirement contributions from 11.5% to 8%, initially announced for new hires and later for all employees, was not one of those recommendations. This cut to compensation was

justified as an action taken due to the current financial crisis and was made without consultation with either the Faculty Senate or the Staff Assembly, despite the numerous resolutions passed by the Senate to the contrary. These resolutions are appended to this statement. Further, the cut is a permanent reduction to compensation while other cuts, including the voluntary 10% salary reduction for top wage earners, are temporary.

The faculty and staff also do not know the extent of the financial burden the university is facing, as the university has not acknowledged how much money was lost during the last 3 months, nor what the expected losses will be during the next fiscal year. Without this data, we cannot, in good faith, accept a permanent reduction to our compensation.

Therefore, the Executive Committees of the Faculty Senate

Continued on Page 3

SPECIAL STATEMENT*Continued from Page 2*

and the Staff Assembly recommend that the university take the following actions as soon as possible:

- Demonstrate a commitment to the principle that “shared governance requires shared information” by making available, in as much detail as possible, the extent of the current financial crisis;

- Provide clarity as to why TCU’s healthy endowment is not being used, as it was during the economic downturn in 2008, to avoid cuts to employee compensation;

- Make the reduction to the retirement contribution temporary in light of a temporary budget crisis;

- Consult with the Senate and Assembly to restore the retirement contribution to 11.5% when the worst of the pandemic is behind us and the financial crisis has subsided;

- Commit to actively involve the Senate and Assembly in any future discussions of changes to employee compensation before they are implemented.

*Attached to this letter are copies of all of the resolutions passed by both the Senate and the Assembly since 2013 that have called for shared governance when considering changes to employee compensation.

Respectfully submitted,

The Executive Committees of the Faculty Senate and Staff Assembly

**The ‘attached’ copies mentioned in the Special Statement above are instead included in the box at right.*

RESOLUTIONS

**Resolution on TCU Employee Benefits
Adopted by the Faculty Senate May 2, 2013**

Whereas the TCU Faculty Senate recognizes the need of the Board of Trustees and senior administrators to practice fiscal responsibility, and that prudent oversight of such responsibility ensures the longevity, competitiveness, and well-being of the institution, and Whereas the TCU Faculty Senate believes that robust benefits are a vital part of employee compensation and thus crucial in attracting top faculty and staff, fostering long-term employee commitment to the institution, and promoting its national and international reputation, and

Whereas the TCU Faculty Senate further believes that robust benefits are crucial in sustaining institutional momentum, maintaining faculty and staff morale, and preserving the Teacher/Scholar model that distinguishes TCU’s excellence, and

Whereas the TCU Faculty Senate is proud to contribute to TCU’s momentum, distinction, and excellence, and is fully committed to protecting the overall health of the university,

Therefore, be it resolved, that the TCU Faculty Senate recommends that employee compensation, including benefits, either be maintained at current levels, or increased when appropriate;

Be it also resolved, that reductions to employee compensation, including benefits, should only be considered in the event of a severe budget crisis that clearly threatens TCU’s institutional health and well-being; that, if such financial exigency occurs, employee compensation should only be considered for reduction as part of a larger campus-wide effort to reduce costs; and that, if such budget cutbacks become necessary, all employees be grandfathered in at their current levels;

Finally, be it further resolved, that any reductions to faculty compensation, including benefits, be discussed in the Faculty Senate before any steps toward implementation are taken; that, as a means of declaring its position, the Faculty Senate take a formal vote on such reductions; and that designated representatives of the TCU Faculty Senate take part in Cabinet-level budget discussions when changes in employee compensation are discussed.

**Resolution on Shared Governance Regarding Employee Benefits
Adopted by the Faculty Senate November 2018**

Whereas the TCU administration, faculty, and staff have strongly supported a campus culture of connection, collaboration, and cooperation; and

Continued on Page 4

RESOLUTIONS*Continued from Page 3*

Whereas shared governance has been widely endorsed as a part of this campus culture; and

Whereas the TCU Faculty Senate's "Resolution on TCU Employee Benefits," adopted by the Senate on May 2, 2013, resolves that employee compensation and benefits should be maintained at current levels or increased, and reduced only in the case of a severe budget crisis that threatens TCU's well-being; and

Whereas the 2013 resolution states that benefit reductions should occur only after the TCU Faculty Senate has had the opportunity to discuss and make a recommendation concerning proposed reductions and that "designated representatives of the TCU Faculty Senate take part in Cabinet-level discussions" when changes in compensation and benefits are discussed; and

Whereas the TCU administration has recently—and without consultation—reduced employee benefits by precluding employees from enrolling in the PPO90 health insurance option and ending access to benefits for domestic partners; and

Whereas these reductions in benefits are inconsistent with TCU's Vision in Action Lead On strategic plan, which calls for strengthening the workforce and emphasizes the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion,

Therefore, be it resolved that the TCU Faculty Senate (1) expresses its concern that the Faculty Senate was not consulted in the administrative recent decisions to reduce benefits, and therefore, (2) respectfully asks for a meaningful dialogue with the Chancellor, the Cabinet, and the Retirement and Benefit Plan Committee to consider the restoration of full access to the PPO90 plan and the domestic partner policy, and (3) calls for specific procedures to implement a greater level of shared governance by involving Faculty Senate representatives in all future administrative deliberations on benefits.

Compensation Resolution**Adopted by the Faculty Senate March 5, 2020**

The TCU Faculty Senate is dedicated to sustaining TCU's momentum, distinction, and excellence, and supports the Vision in Action: Lead On strategic plan, including the goals to strengthen TCU's academic profile and reputation and to strengthen the workforce.

Therefore, be it resolved that the TCU Faculty Senate endorses the principles set forth in the "Resolution on TCU Employee Benefits," adopted unanimously by the Faculty Senate on May 2, 2013, which states that benefits must be considered as a part of compensation, and not separately, that reductions to compensation should only be considered in the event of a budgetary exigency that poses a threat to TCU's well-being, and that such reductions should only be considered as one part of a larger campus-wide effort to reduce expenditures.

Be it further resolved that, in the event of a financial exigency, and before any proposed reductions are implemented, and as a means of declaring its position, the TCU Faculty Senate take a formal vote on any reductions to compensation.

Finally, be it resolved that the TCU Faculty Senate respectfully asks the Chancellor and Cabinet to initiate a campus-wide dialogue on TCU's future that would not only include compensation but all elements of anticipated revenue and expenses, that a task force representing all areas of campus be established to discuss and prepare for the challenges facing TCU, and more broadly higher education, and that, in the spirit of shared governance, this task force be given access to all pertinent information that might impact TCU's future.

Resolution to Endorse Benefits Proposal**Adopted by the Staff Assembly March 3, 2020**

WHEREAS, the standing charge of the University Compensation Advisory Committee (UCAC) is to advise "the administration on policies and procedures relating to retirement, health insurance,

Continued on Page 5

RESOLUTIONS

Continued from Page 4

and other faculty/staff benefits;" and

WHEREAS, the Chancellor charged the Committee with recommending a benefits package for new employees that would be competitive yet sustainable; and

WHEREAS, the Committee has presented a benefits proposal for new employees that provides new benefits while reducing the overall cost; and

WHEREAS, said proposal includes many benefits that are vital to equalize benefits between staff and faculty, including paid parental leave and a simplification of the overall disability leave structure; and,

WHEREAS, current employees will have the option to "opt in" to the new package, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the TCU Staff Assembly endorses the benefits package proposed by the University Compensation Advisory Committee, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the TCU Staff Assembly encourages the TCU Administration and Board of Trustees to adopt this benefits package.

COFFEE WITH THE CHANCELLOR

Our annual Coffee with the Chancellor, scheduled for July 30, has been cancelled due to Covid-19 concerns. We have asked the Chancellor to provide a video message for TCURA members in its place. At this point we are planning a mini town hall format so he can answer some questions facing the university regarding re-opening, safety, budget cuts, and protests that are of concern to retirees. We will let you know how to access it as soon as we get details. Watch your mail or email for further information!

THE CURSE OF THE OAK CONDO

RAY SMILOR

My dear friends--My wife, Judy, likes to watch "The Curse of Oak Island." It's a reality show in which a bunch of guys, in search of a lost treasure, turn the island upside down over and over again in trying to find the riches. Each week, they make concerted efforts to reorganize, reassess, rearrange, recalibrate or redo everything on the island in the hopes of finding that proverbial pot at the end of the rainbow. But they never seem to finish the search. Though Judy tells me after each episode that they are really, really close this week.

In the midst of our current social isolation, I have now realized that I am living in a similar reality world--

the Curse of Oak Condo!

You would think that given that our place is only 2000 square feet, that there would be some end to the number of chores, tasks and cleaning-up initiatives that might be required. Not so. In the search for the perfectly arranged apartment, our home projects have increased, I am facing the daily never-ending review, reengineering and continually sorting and reassembling of things around us without ever reaching an end of them.

Yesterday, I reassessed my set of drawers. They looked a bit disheveled. She wondered how they could get that way. I told her, "I hunt for what I need and after I use it I put

it back wherever I can." "Ah," she said. 'Wouldn't it be nice if it looked neat again?'

I took up the challenge. I carefully folded each tee-shirt, rolled up pajamas, laid out my walking shorts so that the creases lined up. I even matched up all my socks. And I put everything in crisp, clean order. My wife told me I did a good job.

"That," I pointed out, "is actually the most amazing, spectacular, incredible arrangement of drawers in the history of the human race. It is just beautiful, sooooo beautiful. No one has ever done or even thought

Continued on Page 6

THE CURSE OF THE OAK CONDO*Continued from Page 5*

about doing a set of drawers like this! Only I could have fixed all these drawers in such awesome condition. Everyone says it is fantastic. Everyone says I'm a phenomenal drawer arranger. Soooo beautiful."

The other day, it was baseball cards. Judy has kept every baseball card from our two sons since they went through their baseball card phase 30 years ago. I brought up from our storage unit several boxes of cards, which total about 4 million. Judy whipped through those in about a day and a half. She is a machine at sorting and evaluating them.

She held up a picture of Johnny Bench. "What do you think it's worth?" I told her 2 kazillion dollars. She frowned. She soon realized I really don't have the slightest idea of their worth. So, instead, she checked

the potential value of some on eBay, went to on-line sites to find accurate information, talked to baseball card experts on the phone, and then made some informed decisions based on useful, truthful facts. How novel. (Secretly, I hope she finds that \$100,000 card somewhere in the piles.)

Other needed projects are underway. She has been rearranging our bedroom closet. She calls out to me, "Ray, do you really want to keep this blue stripped shirt with the yellow lines?" I know the shirt. I wore it once about a year ago. There is a 1% chance that I will wear it in the next year or so. "Yes, Keep up the good work," I say, so that I don't have to get up and go get it. "No, you won't. Come and take it away." She is not easily fooled, knows false praise when she hears it, and takes responsibility for whatever she is doing. Kind of like a Tom Brady would.

There are plans to redo the pantry,

go through all the old photo albums, rearrange the dishes and pans, clean up the laundry room, straighten up the storage unit (and, I'm sure redo my drawers when they get messy again)--whew--this is the Curse of Oak Condo. I'm not sure how long it will take to get everything right. Maybe, come November.

But for the moment, I wouldn't have it any other way.

Judy knows how to get things done, how to prioritize projects, how to effectively involve others (me), and how to do it all with good spirit and a sense of humor. She has been doing this for and with me going on nearly 51 years, and, Dan Patrick notwithstanding, hopefully many more.

Gotta go. Need to clean up my tool box. (Yes, I have one, though I try never to use it.)

Good Health and Good Luck,
Ray

*In Memorium***Terry E. Dielman**

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Former Chair, Radio-TV-Film

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**NOTE**

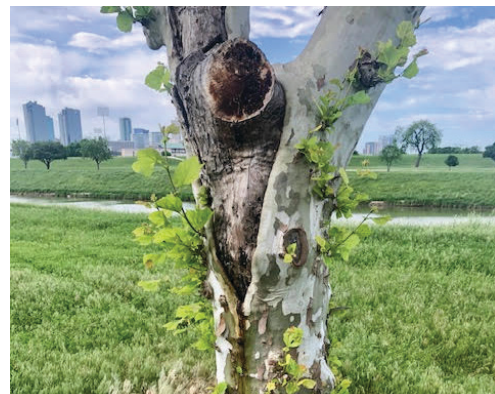
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**FIND US ON FACEBOOK**

Search "TCU Retirees' Association" in the search line, and filter by groups. Click the "Join" button.

MEANDERINGS ALONG THE TRINITY TRAILS

PHOTOS BY ANDY FORT



MISSION STATEMENT

The TCU Retirees' Association exists to provide opportunities for fellowship, to promote lifelong learning, to advocate for fair benefits, to recognize the accomplishments of its members, and to strengthen the relationship between the retirees and the University.

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LONELINESS IN THE AGE OF COVID-19: WAYS TO INFORM FUTURE OLDER PERSON CARE

CAROLYN CAGLE

I recently read an article expressing deep concern about loneliness among older Americans due to social and emotional disconnection by those persons following CDC guidelines to “flatten the COVID-19 curve.” According to this article, 43% of adults over the age of 65 years feel isolated or lonely, responses that increase their risk of dementia, heart disease, and stroke. Older person

loneliness contributes \$7B to annual Medicare costs and, thus, represents a significant issue for societal attention. Both the U.K. and Singapore recently recognized the need for a governmental cabinet level position focusing on loneliness. The person in that position will develop plans to transform aging and connect multiple generations to support older persons’ sense of purpose and engagement to

prevent loneliness and isolation. The federal government approved a \$2T economic stimulus package this past April to fuel our country’s economy in the midst of high COVID-19 related unemployment. Is it time for an equal stimulus to respond to the dangers of social disconnection that may affect our future need for a more caring, stronger, and connected society post-COVID-19?

HOW COULD OUR COUNTRY IMPROVE OLDER PERSONS’ SENSE OF ENGAGEMENT AND PURPOSE TO PREVENT LONELINESS AND ISOLATION? IDEAS FROM SCHOLARS, POLICYMAKERS, AND EXPERTS ON AGING:

- ✓ **Expand older persons’ educational offerings to support better community connection** – Harvard, Stanford, and Notre Dame are just a few universities that offer learning opportunities to stimulate older person learning and support intergeneration connection.
- ✓ **Encourage older persons’ involvement in neighborhood schools** – Those places would benefit from those persons’ experience and talents to strengthen student learning, provide parental support, and improve mental and physical well-being of those groups and the community.
- ✓ **Encourage volunteering by older persons** – I’ve relished serving as an active retired volunteer in five diverse local community activities to meet my core values for social and learning connections and provide meaning to my life; recent literature shows that the enormous numbers of volunteers responding to the pandemic have gained meaning and joy from their local and global service.
- ✓ **Support home-sharing options, through revised zoning laws, to allow affordable and safe housing** – These would benefit both young people and older individuals by supporting older persons’ “aging in place” with the help from co-living persons; such options would promote housing sensitive to older persons’ needs, cut housing cost for younger persons, and support valuable intergenerational lifelong learning and face-to-face communication (better than a text or posting on social media!) as well.
- ✓ **Support mentoring-mentee relationships between all ages of persons to promote learning, social support, and human connection to prevent loneliness and isolation.**
- ✓ **Encourage societal investment in technologies to improve safety and quality of older persons’ lives** – Telehealth currently allows monitoring technology to connect persons with health care providers for continuity of care, saves money, and allows older persons to remain in their homes; evidence shows that current devices like Fitbit exercise trackers help with fall prevention, wandering older persons, and even appointment reminders to improve older persons’ quality of life; technology also connects older persons to family and friends to prevent loneliness and isolation.

Article references available upon request.