

HOWARD UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF THE FACULTY SENATE

February 16, 2012

Dr. Sidney Ribeau, President, and
Mr. Addison Barry Rand, Chairman, Board of Trustees
Howard University
2400 Sixth St., NW, Suites 402 & 440
Washington, DC 20059

Dear President Ribeau and Chairman Rand:

The 13 February 2012 letter to the University community from President Ribeau outlines some of the measures that are proposed to alleviate anticipated budget shortfalls for this fiscal year, which include reductions in force, stringent budget controls, the closing of the University during the Spring Break recess, and potential furloughs for faculty and administrators. The letter states, *“During the first half of the fiscal year, our expenses exceeded available revenue, and we were faced with other financial challenges resulting from the national economic crisis, rising operational costs, and duplication of services. In spite of these challenges, however, I am certain that together we will be able to build a Howard University that is stronger and more securely positioned to carry out its vision and unique mission.”*

Reactions of faculty to the letter range from deep concerns that budget shortfalls at Howard seem to be a recurring dilemma, to resigned acceptance of more belt tightening, including the possibility of more furloughs, all at a time when the economic downturn has hurt many faculty households.

Thus, we express great disappointment and outrage to discover that the University awarded significant bonuses to three (3) senior officers and one (1) faculty member/center director of the University in 2010, in excess of \$1.1 million (Howard University 2010 IRS Form 990, page 121). When our Faculty Senate representatives to the University-wide Budget Advisory Committee (BAC) inquired of this, they were directed by BAC Chair, Dr. Alvin Thornton, to the following excerpt for explanation:

In 2007, as part of a comprehensive review and adjustment of compensation for faculty, deans and staff personnel, the executive compensation committee of the board of trustees approved a supplemental payment for three key officers if they remained employed with Howard University on June 30, 2010. Such payments were made on that date and are reflected as bonuses in this form 990. The compensation review and adjustments approved in 2007 for all employees were based on studies by an independent compensation consultant in connection with the then announced transition of presidential leadership (sic).
(Howard University 2010 IRS 990, page 125)



The bonus compensation of these three (3) senior officers and one (1) faculty member/center director of the University is viewed overwhelmingly by faculty to be an affront to the integrity of the University and a slap in the face to the entire faculty who have been laboring under salary compression for a number of years. That the University would agree to what many consider to be outrageous bonuses and that these individuals would accept them, are egregious acts of blatant disregard for the University when our students and their families are struggling to pay tuition increases. We are also troubled that an independent compensation consultant may have been contracted using University funds, to generate a report that, in all likelihood, impacted the faculty but whose findings have not been shared with the University community. Our financial aid is inadequate to meet the needs of graduate students, our infrastructure has deteriorated and is, in some cases, downright dangerous and our faculty salaries are noncompetitive at a time when the University community is continually being asked to make sacrifices for the common good.

We are further outraged that in spite of the Faculty Senate's expressed concerns for faculty salary increases, these bonuses were approved and dispersed. Moreover, according to the recent Faculty Senate Task Force Report (*A Comparative Equity Analysis of Administrator and Faculty Salaries at Howard University*, September 14, 2011, Appendix pgs. 11-14), these persons are currently employed by the University and are compensated according to Carnegie I standards—unlike the faculty. We find this to be morally repugnant for the University to award very large sums of additional University monies when our endowment, our Federal subsidy and the University's operating budget have decreased significantly.

President Ribeau, we understand the bonus compensations were not recommended by your administration. However, Chairman Rand, these actions occurred under your watch, and regardless of which President (and Board members) negotiated and gave approval for (presumed) consultant fees and the aforementioned bonuses, the awarding of them amounts to moral turpitude and blatant corruption of the ideals, principles and mission under which Howard University has functioned since its inception. Indeed, such actions lead the faculty, staff, students, and alumni of this institution to question the sensitivity, sensibility, and moral integrity of certain members of the Board of Trustees, its current leadership, the former President (Swygert) and the compensated individuals. Given the timing of such bonuses during a transition in leadership, these actions appear to many within and outside of Howard University, as disingenuous and opportunistic.

To be sure, it is a dark and shameful time at Howard University.

President Ribeau, your arrival to Howard University in 2008 was greeted with anticipation that a new relationship with the faculty would be based on mutual respect and principles of openness, transparency, and accountability. We appreciate your efforts to improve communications between you, your administrative cabinet and officers of the Faculty Senate. However, you should know that the faculty continues to express outrage about, disgust in, and distrust of the lack of integrity demonstrated by some in central administration, and trustees who purport to be leaders of this institution.

President Ribeau and Chairman Rand, we call upon you to exercise the necessary leadership to put an immediate end to the type of financial hemorrhage that we have just witnessed. Moreover, on behalf of our faculty colleagues and guided by the principles of shared governance, we request that you address the following:

- Provide a written explanation to the University community of the factors that necessitated contracting the independent consultant (HU 2010 IRS 990) to generate a report on faculty, dean and staff salaries.
- Provide full written disclosure to the University community of the name, title, credentials of, and any compensation paid to the independent consultant/consulting firm that was referenced in the HU 2010 IRS 990.
- Provide full written disclosure to the University community of the final report generated by the independent consultant (HU 2010 IRS 990) with respect to its report on faculty, deans and staff salaries.
- Provide full written disclosure to the University community of the deliberations of the Compensation Committee of the Board of Trustees that justified the bonuses for senior officers and faculty (HU 2010 IRS 990).
- Provide a written explanation to the faculty of why the University-wide Budget Advisory Committee (BAC) was not called upon to make its recommendations for strategies to alleviate the current budget shortfall.
- Revoke any consideration and/or actions concerning furloughs for the Faculty.

We anticipate your timely response concerning these important matters.

Sincerely,



Eric Walters, Chair
Faculty Senate



Joan Payne, Vice Chair



Clint Wilson, II. Secretary

Cc: Leffall, LaSalle, Provost and Senior V.P. for Academic Affairs and Health Sciences
Schmoke, Kurt, Interim Deputy Provost for Academic Affairs
Frederick, Wayne, Interim Deputy Provost Health Sciences
Thornton, Alvin, Executive Assistant to President Ribeau
Tarola, Robert, Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer - Treasurer
Singleton, Kimberly, President, Howard University Alumni Association
All Faculty
Members of the Board of Trustees