

## **We Love KU, but the Current Budget Conversations Hurt**

We are KU. We have joined this community for a diverse range of reasons. Some love being a part of a family tradition. Others grew up here and want to stay close to the communities they cherish. Many are drawn to the great ideas and passionate teachings of the faculty, staff, and other experts on our campus. Being a Jayhawk doesn't hurt during basketball season, either. Whether you were at KU 50 years ago or coming in the fall, we want to be part of a community that takes care of each other. And right now, we are hurting.

The faculty, staff, and students have been asked by the chancellor and interim provost to absorb a 6% (\$20 million) cut in KU's base budget. On multiple occasions, the University Senate has suggested that the administration could change its proposal in order to reduce the burden of the budget cuts on academic and service units by half. While a 3% (\$10 million) budget cut is extremely painful, it is much less than the proposed 6% cut. We are now making a public case for why these cuts are hurting our institution and appealing to the statewide KU community to begin asking questions of the chancellor. We do not know why he will not ask KU's partners to help shoulder the budget cuts, rather than asking the faculty, staff, and students alone to absorb them entirely.

As the everyday reality of these budget cuts becomes clearer, we see that they will undermine KU's mission, which the Regents describe as "a major comprehensive research and teaching university that serves as a center for learning, scholarship and creative endeavor." The current budget conversations have missed the mark. If we want KU to thrive intellectually and fiscally, we need to focus instead on creating an academic community of which we want to remain a part.

Students come to KU with pride yet feel cheated that instructors have been asked to do more with less even as administrators dodge their questions about impacts to the student experience. The budget cuts extend beyond the availability of physical resources to the loss of vital human resources, they realize. Their educational experiences will be affected by downsizing the frontline staff who help them navigate academic systems. Students will be affected by decreasing the number of faculty who create program content, engage them in the classroom, and inspire future scholars and leaders in our state. Fewer faculty will mean bigger classes and fewer course offerings for some, resulting in narrower study options and course content for our undergraduates. Students will have less dedicated time with staff and faculty as people are asked to distribute a wider load of work. The cuts will limit access to staff who plan and develop the community activities that bring rich and vibrant experiences to our campus.

For staff, the budget cuts will also mean a reduction in salary and operating expenses like equipment, travel, office supplies, and professional development. For some units, the only option is the elimination of staff positions, including the reduction of 29 currently-filled staff positions across campus, and the possibility of cuts to student hourly ones. Staff members dedicated to KU and critical to student and faculty support have been told that they must go through the holiday season wondering who will receive the notices of termination that are to come as staff positions get eliminated over the coming months. For those who remain, the reductions create an unequal workload balance with no additional compensation.

Faculty come to KU from elite institutions across the country because it has maintained an environment where faculty can invest in students through teaching, create new knowledge through research, and contribute to the surrounding community. To maintain this balance, KU requires thriving departments and schools with faculty at all levels and experiences. But the budget plan includes a Voluntary Separation Incentive Program (VSIP) that has motivated long-term faculty to retire early from the University with no certainty of their positions being replaced by new faculty. At minimum, this will result in the short-term burden of added responsibilities on the faculty who remain, limiting further each faculty member's time for student engagement, coursework innovation, and creative research development. We have no certainty that these changes will be short-term and fear that they may become a permanent shift in university operations, to the detriment of KU's status as a major research university.

The University Senate has taken a stand that faculty, staff, and students alone cannot be asked to absorb budget cuts that resulted from poor administrative decisions. We ask that all of KU's partners, including Kansas Athletics and the KU Endowment Association, step up and absorb half of the cuts asked of the faculty, staff, and students.

We love KU and want to continue building a community where all students, staff, and faculty can thrive. We ask that you consider the ways in which these budget cuts will affect KU, and that you express your concerns to the chancellor in order to find other solutions that will keep KU the place we love and respect.

Signed by the following officers at the University of Kansas,

Ruben Flores	University Senate President
Kirk McClure	Faculty Senate President
Michelle Ginavan Hayes	Staff Senate President
Charles Jetty	Student Body Vice President