

Graduating Students of the University: We don't need budget cuts and layoffs in the midst of a \$4.5 billion capital campaign, we need better priorities

Attention:

Robert Zimmer, President

Eric Isaacs, Provost

David Fithian, Executive Vice President

Rowan Miranda, Vice President for Operations and Chief Financial Officer

Joseph Neubauer, Chairman, Board of Trustees

As graduating students of the University of Chicago, we are sitting in the Admissions Office in Rosenwald Hall to call attention to the ways in which the University's fixation on increasing its capital and prestige causes harm to people within the University community and outside it. The University has the wrong priorities. Furthermore, the problems we have witnessed in the years we have spent here have not occurred by accident or in isolation, but as the direct result of what the University chooses to prioritize. Right now, the University is simultaneously calling for austerity and launching the largest capital campaign in its history. We refuse to accept that severe budget cuts, which will result in layoffs and cuts to needed student and academic services, are necessary, given that the University is raising \$4.5 billion as part of its "Impact and Inquiry" campaign, completing a \$1.5 billion campus remodeling, and laying the groundwork for unwanted, unprecedented developments in other neighborhoods. Prestige means nothing if it comes at the expense of the safety and well-being of the University's students, faculty, staff, and neighbors.

This budget is only the latest instance of something we have seen again and again. While the University publicly touts its diverse student body and its faculty's academic achievements, the institution continually privileges prestige and profit-making over addressing the many issues that affect members of its campus and the surrounding community. Indeed, it refuses to address these issues because doing so would mar its image and impede further profit-making. In our time here, we have seen the University disregard the concerns of its students over sexual assault, racism on campus, socioeconomic barriers, LGBTQ issues, and disabilities; we have seen it exploit its graduate students as labor; we have seen it overpolice its surrounding community while denying those same neighborhoods their only viable option for a trauma center; we have seen it invest in climate change-causing fossil fuels and the Israeli occupation of Palestine; and we have seen it underpay (and now layoff) its workers.

We recognize that the University's continued prioritization of its financial interests over the needs of its community and neighbors is a structural problem that cannot be fully addressed by policy changes and individual solutions. We recognize too, however, that we cannot ignore the injustice and harm that this causes. For as long as the University continues to protect its image at the expense of the people it "serves," we will continue to demand change.

Given the urgency of the needs of those whom the University's priorities affect most adversely, and the University's repeated refusal to listen to our demands, we are sitting in the Admissions Office to

demand the University release the details of its budget cuts, and to demand negotiations with one of the abovementioned decision-makers about the below-listed demands.

Budget

We demand that the University not make these budget cuts at all. We especially demand that it meet the following provisions:

- No layoffs to low-wage workers.
- No reductions in student job opportunities and assistance, and protections for all resources that help low-income students.
- No cuts to academic budgets, which will only further increase the exploitation of adjuncts and graduate students as underpaid labor.
- No cuts to jobs that will require faculty to take on additional administrative tasks.

Campus Sexual Violence and Title IX Compliance

- Provide all University of Chicago students with ongoing comprehensive education and resources on: consent; sexual assault, intimate partner violence, domestic violence, and stalking; student's rights under Title IX; and how to report gender-based violence at UChicago and in the community.
 - Starting in fall 2015, incorporate this comprehensive education and information about resources at the "U-Choose" Chicago Life Meeting after Sex Signals for college students.
 - Starting in fall 2016, replace Sex Signals with a program that incorporates survivor narratives and acknowledges the harsh reality of sexual and gender-based violence.
 - Starting in fall 2015, establish in-person comprehensive educational programs at all graduate and professional schools.
- Provide public and easily accessible information online for students in multiple languages that outlines what their rights and options are when they report sexual violence, domestic violence, intimate partner violence, and stalking.
 - This should include flowcharts and timelines of the reporting processes at UChicago.
- Release aggregate data from the past two years to supplement information that the University has to release as per the Clery Act;
 - This should include data about the number of reports that go to a disciplinary process, how many of "the accused" are found responsible, and what the sanctions are for "responsible" students (e.g., suspension)
 - This data should be released semi-annually, as at Yale.
 - Release the campus climate survey results before the end of the spring quarter of 2015.
- University committees addressing sexual and gender-based violence must include student advocates and survivors. This includes Provost-appointed committees that review changes to the Policy on Unlawful Harassment and Sexual Misconduct.

Socioeconomic Diversity

- Comprehensive data should be collected via surveys, etc. about students' experiences with student employment, particularly students receiving need-based financial aid. Additionally, the financial aid office should have data on the percentage of students receiving private/federal loans and programming that addresses student debt and credit.
- All initiatives under "No Barriers" should be instituted retroactively for students receiving need-based financial aid (no loans, funded opportunities, lifelong career support; <https://nobarriers.uchicago.edu/>).
- Commit to instituting mandatory diversity training including class for all faculty and staff that work directly with students (includes, but is not limited to: Resident Heads, Assistant Resident Heads, Orientation leaders, faculty, etc.)
- Subsidize travel costs for families who cannot afford to travel to orientation week and/or graduation.

Labor

- Institute a \$15/hour University minimum wage for all University employees, including part-time, off-campus, and student workers.

Equitable Policing

- Accountability. Strengthen the effectiveness and credibility of the Independent Review Committee (IRC) by making two changes:
 - The IRC is currently appointed by the Provost. Create another mechanism for appointing student and community representatives to the IRC—e.g., students are appointed by student government and community members by aldermen in consultation with community organizations in their wards.
 - The IRC currently reviews investigations after the fact and provides recommendations that are purely advisory. Make IRC review an integral part of the investigative process: the investigator submits the results of the investigation and recommendation to the IRC. The IRC reviews the investigation and makes its recommendations to the UCPD chief. Ultimate authority resides with the UCPD chief, but it is expected that the chief will make an effort to come to agreement with the IRC. In the event the IRC is not satisfied with the quality or thoroughness of an investigation, it can send the case back for more work.
- Transparency. As a private institution performing an essential governmental function—law enforcement—the U of C should be held subject to the same standards of transparency as public police forces in Illinois.
- Information. In addition to the general transparency requirements, the U of C should undertake the following:
 - Log information on all pedestrian stops, as well as traffic stops.
 - Conduct a citizens survey. (Sometime next year, after reforms have been implemented.)

In the fall, a group of students and allies came together to draft a list of demands calling on the University to take clear action to address its culture of racial and ethnic discrimination. We fully support their demands, and repeat them in the following three categories here because the University continues to neglect the needs of the less entitled members of its community.

Campus Climate

- Immediately release the results of the campus climate survey on sexual misconduct and assault.
- Implement a campus climate survey on diversity and inclusion by Autumn Quarter 2015, and immediately release the results upon completion.
- Commission a program, similar to AlcoholEdu, that demonstrates the importance of cross-cultural acceptance and inclusion.
 - This program should be tailored to the specific roles of administrators, faculty, staff, and students. This will ensure that all members of the UChicago community have a clear and concrete idea of what behaviors and attitudes are crucial to creating an inclusive and civil community.

Undergraduate Curriculum

- An investigatory committee should be set up to draw from the successful efforts of our peer institutions in implementing required diversity and inclusion education for all students.
- Diversify the Core curriculum by developing more courses that grant significant attention to the concepts of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and other issues of social justice.
- Change the curriculum of Chicago Life Meetings in order to address issues of diversity and inclusion for student in the college during Orientation Week
- Add a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion requirement to the Core, informed by initiatives similar to UC San Diego's DEI requirement.
 - This can take the form of a writing-seminar style that can be taken pass or fail.

Faculty Recruitment and Retention

- Intensification of concrete strategies for attracting diverse faculty
 - Make a commitment of funding coupled with hired positions focused on increasing numbers of faculty/staff of color in all departments and offices at the College and graduate schools.
 - Commit to establishing transparency in the recruitment and hiring processes of diverse faculty.
 - Commit to establishing transparency in tenure strategies for departments.
 - Commit to the implementation of concrete strategies for retaining diverse faculty including, but not limited to, supportive programming and courses in their specializations.

Graduate Student Life

- Engage with graduate employees in open, democratic dialogue, and respect the right of organized labor to negotiate for fair compensations.
- Eliminate the practice of tying "time to degree" requirements to funding.
- Offer both academic & alternative professionalization courses in all departments and across divisions.
- Eliminate Advanced Residency tuition.
- Increase job security for research positions in the Sciences.
- Raise teaching wages to be commensurate with inflation.
- Abolish all hidden fees, particularly the [Student Life Fee](#).

- Partner with graduate-employees to improve teacher training on issues of diversity and accessibility.
- Institutionalize graduate feedback in department hiring processes.
- Improve availability of information on and resources to adequately deal with sexual harassment.
- Enable all graduate-employees to access affordable and reliable child care, and extend child care stipends and parental leave policy to all MA and International student parents.
- Enforce transparency about health care costs, and distinguish fees from benefits.

Social Service Administration (SSA) Student Demands

- Collaborate with students and a third-party, applied research organization to create a 5-year strategic plan to understand and address the oppression of marginalized students at SSA.
- Hire a full-time staff member (Anti-Oppression Coordinator) on a 5-year contract to coordinate the implementation of the 5-year strategic plan, who regularly reports to the student body. On the hiring committee for the Anti-Oppression Coordinator there must be a student representative elected by peers.
- Make an institutional commitment to transparency on who at SSA holds responsibility for addressing student grievances about bias in the classroom and what accountability measures exist for ANY teaching staff.

LGBTQ Student Life Issues

- Expand the Office of LGBTQ Student Life from one to three full-time staff
- Make all single-user restrooms explicitly gender neutral
- Have gender neutral, single-user and accessible restrooms in every building on campus

Climate Change

- Immediately freeze any new investments in the most carbon-intensive fossil fuel extraction companies.
- Divest from direct ownership and any comingled funds that include fossil fuel public equities and corporate bonds within five years.
- Implement climate and carbon risk assessment into the University's short-term and long-term investment strategies.

Israeli Occupation of Palestine

Long term:

- Answer to Palestinian civil society's call to boycott Israeli academic, research, and governmental institutions until the end of the Israeli Occupation.

Short term:

- Discontinue the Jerusalem study abroad program until the Israeli occupation ends.

Trauma Center

Long term:

- Open an adult level-one trauma center at the University of Chicago Medical Center.

Short term:

- Commit to involving community input in the current feasibility study.
- Raise the age of the current pediatric trauma care facility to 21.