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Letters to the Editor

2:00 a.m. July 17, 2009

Write us . . . and here's how

To encourage community dialogue on important public matters, *The San Diego Union-Tribune* welcomes letters to the editor. Space is limited, so we offer these tips and policy guidelines:

- Please be aware that lengthy letters reduce chances for publication. Our suggested maximum length is 200 words.
- To allow as many letter writers as possible to be published, it is the policy of the newspaper to publish no more than one letter from the same author within 30 days.
- Letters should be exclusive to the *Union-Tribune*. “Open letters” and submissions sent originally to individuals, agencies or other media outlets will not be considered for publication.
- We prefer letters that reference items published in the *Union-Tribune* within the past month.
- Letters may be edited for space, grammar, clarity or other reasons.
- It is our policy to publish letters supporting or opposing a particular issue in a ratio reflecting the number received on each side.
- All letters considered for publication will be verified for authenticity. Letters must include a full name, address, daytime phone number and, if faxed or mailed, be signed. E-mail submissions are preferred and can be sent to letters@uniontrib.com.
- Letters can be mailed to Letters Editor, The San Diego Union-Tribune, P.O. Box 120191, San Diego, CA 92112-0191, or faxed to (619) 260-5081.
- Letters submitted may be used in print or in digital form in any publication or service authorized by the Union-Tribune Publishing Co.

UC cuts will hurt education and research

Re: “UC leaders paint dire picture of cutbacks” (A1, June 16):

Your article does not point out that for all intents and purposes the University of California is not a

state-funded university. The state of California only provides 16 percent of the total UC budget, and this is going down. Most of the funding comes from external sources (not tuition, either) generated by faculty in the sciences, engineering and medicine.

Squeezing the university financially will not only destroy the education of people trained in high-technology areas but will also destroy the best research in the country, the only engine that can get us out of the present disastrous economic situation.

The general public and probably the Legislature are under the delusion that they fund this great university system. Of course, part of the blame is ours since we, the UC faculty, don't spend enough time explaining the realities of funding.

IVAN K. SCHULLER
Distinguished Professor
Physics Department, UCSD

In the 44 years that I have been at UCSD, it has grown into one of the top research universities in the country, a \$2.5 billion powerhouse in the San Diego economy and one of the largest employers in the region. The UCSD payroll is about \$1.25 billion, but only one-fourth of this comes from the state. The remaining three-fourths comes from other sources such as federal research funds and the UCSD Medical Center.

So the proposed 8 percent cut in UCSD's payroll will save the state about \$25 million while cutting over \$75 million from the payroll of medical staff and federally funded researchers. And each federal dollar spent at UC generates overhead revenue at the current rate of 54.5 percent in addition to state revenues from sales and income taxes. Where is the wisdom in shooting yourself in the foot?

JONATHAN BERGER
Scripps Institution of Oceanography, UCSD

First, state employees, and now, UC employees. Can we furlough the Legislature? Better yet, can we pay them with IOUs?

LARRY D. BROOKS
Del Mar

How to save money and save the University of California? The answer's simple and occurs during summer. Head to any UC campus at this time of the year, walk into the grand main library and observe not a being to be found, with the exception of a few students dozing off. Yet, even with most of the 225,000 students gone, the lights remain on, the staff remains on the clock. It's not just the libraries either. Mall-size student centers remain open and running, even when there are few students to serve (Price Center, UCSD, anyone?).

Wouldn't it be judicious to close or at least significantly reduce the operating hours during this time? In 2007-2008, UC used \$372 million in energy utilities – certainly a large chunk could be saved by switching power off during summer. And not to forget, money could yet be saved by not having to pay the unnecessarily staffed workers running these wastes.

KEVIN HSU
San Diego

S.D. pension reforms should remain in place

Re: "Pension accounting changes considered" (A1, July 16):

All of us are well aware of the deals that were struck by prior boards in 1996 and 2002 that increased benefits while lowering payments into the pension system. In contrast, what has happened in the marketplace over the past year is a global event, not an event manufactured in San Diego.

SDCERS trustees' primary fiduciary responsibility is to its members, retirees and beneficiaries. However, the law recognizes another secondary responsibility to SDCERS' plan sponsors, including the city of San Diego. This recognition is appropriate because there is no benefit to SDCERS' membership if the plan sponsor is forced into bankruptcy. This would jeopardize, not protect, SDCERS' members.

The SDCERS board should do exactly what it is doing: getting the facts, listening to experts and discussing the issue in a public and transparent way. Whatever decision the board makes should be a measured one that recognizes the historic stock meltdown that has occurred, without undoing the hard-fought actuarial reforms we undertook beginning in 2005.

TOM HEBRANK
Past President
SDCERS Board of Administration

U-T's disagreement with Mayor's Office

Re: "Mayor's aide took records U-T asked for on vacation" (Our Region, July 16):

The Union-Tribune is wrong in its negative slant in this article regarding Darren Pudgil, the mayor's aide who took records requested through the Public Records Act with him on vacation. While I personally know nothing about the matter, from reading the article it is obvious to me that Pudgil is another overwhelmed city employee who, failing to get all his work done in the limited hours of the day, went above and beyond the call of duty by taking his work with him on a family vacation.

The Union-Tribune should cease its relentless attack on local government over silly issues. Public Records Act requests take time and effort to comply with. The city's work force is already stretched overly thin due to budget cutbacks. Why doesn't the newspaper stop its campaign of trumped-up, meaningless and irresponsible charges against a group of very hard-working and civic-minded employees, and instead focus on real news?

LAURIE ORANGE
Chula Vista

I read with great interest the Union-Tribune's article detailing the mayor's director of communication

working on his vacation to respond to Union-Tribune reporter Brooke Williams' most recent public records request. The circumstances surrounding hiring of the city's purchasing director is newsworthy, and the Union-Tribune did a good job in raising the issue and following up with a related public records request.

But why am I reading about what your reporter is doing to get information for the story and some minor delays? The latest article lacks content, and the headline is grossly misleading. It infers that the mayor's aide was taking something with him to keep it from the Union-Tribune rather than to work on it during his vacation. If the city refuses to provide information it is legally required to provide or when you've completed your investigation, write another article.

ERNIE ANDERSON
San Diego

After reading the article about how creative the Mayor's Office is at avoiding the release of info you requested, I have an idea. Instead of having a picture of the return of a drug-suspended baseball player on the front page, put in bold print a section showing when you made the initial request for info and follow up with any later requests until you get the information.

STEVE MEDAK
San Diego

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