

BOT Public Comments  
4/5/2024

Hello my name is Trevino Brings Plenty and I am a Councilor-at-Large of the PSU-AAUP Executive Council. the labor union representing 1,200 full-time faculty and Academic Professionals here at Portland State. In my work at Portland State I serve our community as Coordinator of Native American Student Services.

Today I am here to urge the Board of Trustees to center their focus on our community. We are a community of people. Trust is paramount in each of our roles. Just as students must trust me to serve their needs, so, too, must the Board trust that the stories and experiences we share with them to be true.

We have been working at this institution to gain the trust of Administration, and Administration has been working to gain our trust after years of division and poor decision making. Unfortunately the events of the past several months have strained this trust rebuilding exercise. It is incumbent on the Board and University Administration to respect and adhere to shared governance processes and the various collective bargaining agreements at the University. These are not operational complexities. Rather, they are robust processes and practices that ensure the voices and interests of on-the-ground student facing workers are heard, utilized, respected, and taken seriously. Shared governance reflects the people doing the work. Collective bargaining agreements are also about the people, dignity, and respect. When people are viewed as complexities in any organization, it makes me wonder whether the organization's priorities are in the right place. Isn't a University about people? Isn't it about shared dialogue and learning to think and serving our communities?

And we have put a lot of trust into the Board of Trustees as well.

We are attempting to trust that when you make financial decisions that they are people-centered. We are attempting to trust that you have the needs of our students at the forefront of your mind. Unfortunately, those same students were silenced by the Finance committee Chair yesterday as F&A discussed raising tuition. We are attempting to trust that the Board committee chairs accurately represent their committee members' views and discussions of those committees. Unfortunately, we haven't yet been convinced. At the special Finance & Administration Committee meeting held on March 6th, we heard Trustee Reitenauer remind all committee members that when the Board forces budget cuts on the University, that it's the people who suffer. Sadly, she felt the Committee needed this reminder, just as the Finance & Administration Committee Chair needed reminding to accurately reflect its committee members' discussion points. In this context BoT Finance asked for additional, painful 3% cuts over 3 years yesterday.

When the Board forces cuts on the University, students who desperately need to make appointments with financial aid and academic advisors but can't because staffing is strained, students who need Intensive English Language instruction will be turned away from Portland

State because there will be no faculty left to serve them. Current IELP students don't even know who will be providing their education for the remainder of their program after June. Students who need letters of recommendation from their professors for jobs or entrance into graduate programs likely won't even know how to reach out once IELP faculty have been laid off.

When the F&A committee says "shrinking the workforce requires a systemic approach to ensure long term stability," who's "stability" and "sustainability" are we talking about? Who is this "sustainability" and "stability" serving when a University President who makes almost twice as much annually as the President of the United States describes layoffs as "business as usual" during a February 22nd budget forum?"

As we are becoming an HSI and AANAPISI institution, how will we retain students with these identities if we continue to cut student facing services and student facing instruction?

Our working conditions are PSU students' learning conditions. The University and the people who serve it on a daily basis are counting on the board to allow reserves spending. PSU has a bright future, but only if the Board can make people-first financial decisions. This includes allowing deep reserves spending to invest in PSU's bright future. It also means that the Board must hold University Administration accountable. University Administration and the board should understand, respect, and engage in good faith with both shared governance processes and collective bargaining agreements. Thank you for your service and dedication to PSU. We hope we can continue to trust that you will make people-centered decisions for this University.