

October 4, 2016

Chancellor Michael Amiridis
2833 UH MC 102
601 S. Morgan St
Chicago, Illinois 60607

Dear Chancellor Amiridis,

We are all unhappy with the difficult situation that our state government leaders have put us in by not passing a budget last year and only a partial budget for this year, making our economic future precarious. While we understand that economic contingencies need to be made to ensure that UIC is able to meet its obligations, we are concerned with how the decision was made to collect \$125 million in institutional funds from colleges including ICR to cover the non-appropriated state funds for the second half of FY2017. Our concerns include the way the decision was made, its implementation at the college level, and the lack of information about how these funds will be used, whether returned or not. All have serious implications for faculty recruitment, retention, and shared governance.

This decision was apparently made centrally without input from college-level administrators and faculty, and without input from key faculty organizations such as the senate and the union. As implemented, this mandate has resulted in very different treatment of faculty across colleges and departments. As an example, one college is protecting ICR accounts of recent hires over the accounts of faculty who have worked for decades with many large and complex projects, while in another no individual ICR accounts are being touched. While we understand that flexibility gives discretion to the college, which each have different priorities and methods of operating, it overlooks the increasing importance of ICR accounts to faculty across nearly all units at UIC. Accrued ICR fills critical gaps that keep research faculty and others employed, providing bridge funding that is not generally available for pending grants. ICR also is used frequently to cover costs in projects that are not allowed under the grant and unanticipated issues that may arise during project implementation.



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While presented as temporary, the current situation is already affecting faculty with ICR accounts on multiple levels and is a change in work conditions. Such changes during a contract period must be discussed beforehand with the faculty union and should be discussed with the senate as well. This also should include how funds will be used and with justification, about which at this point we have no information.

We are at a critical juncture at UIC regarding our overall research endeavor. Faculty recruitment and retention are key to the future of the campus. However, the plan for aggressive retention packages is not sufficient – we already are hearing about faculty and administrators looking for other jobs. Retention packages are meaningless if faculty feel that commitments will not be honored. Equally, it is not a productive way to maintain morale across the campus by pulling ICR accounts of long-term faculty who have been productive enough to have them and are under increasing pressure from funders to meet difficult expectations. All this makes recruitment even more difficult.

We indeed hope that ICR and other institutional funds will be returned within the next few months, as stated in your email to the University community. However, even in the best-case scenario, where the funds are returned, we can anticipate many more budgetary decisions made over the next months and years with downstream effects that may not be anticipated without broad input from faculty and administration at all levels. The UIC budgetary process this year has not been as transparent as we had hoped it would be, and with no faculty engagement. This is not healthy for our campus or the greater community we serve. We are hopeful, based on our past experience, that we can work together to address these concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Janet Smith".

Janet Smith
President, UIC United Faculty
Local #6456 AFT-IFT, AAUP, AFL-CIO