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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FOR INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT  
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<http://www.rideraaup.net> (negotiation  
updates, position papers, financial data)

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## **FACULTY: RIDER ADMINISTRATION'S CONTRACT DEMANDS IMPERIL START OF FALL SEMESTER CLASSES**

LAWRENCE – Confused budget projections and shifting demands by Rider University Administration has stymied faculty contract talks for months and could disrupt the Sept. 6 start of classes if no resolution is reached by this Thursday.

Wielding dismal and changing financial forecasts, Rider administration demanded in May that the American Association of University Professors chapter members give up approximately \$10 million annually to keep the University's solvent—an increase of \$4 million over its November demands, according to a letter the faculty union president sent to the University's trustees last week.

“Based on analysis of financial data provided by Rider’s finance division, we believe Rider's current and future fiscal situation has been misrepresented,” Dr. Elizabeth Scheiber, AAUP chapter president, told trustees. “Rider is not in danger of a \$10 million cash deficit this year or in future years, and will very likely have a cash surplus this year. According to Moody’s February 2017 update, ‘the university will produce operating cash flow in the 6-8% range.’”

Rider's bargaining unit represents 580 full and part-time professors, librarians, coaches and athletic trainers. In previous negotiations over the 40 plus years the unit has been active, the parties have agreed to extend the contract after the contract expiration date. This year Rider Administration has vowed not to extend the contract after it expires on August 31.

On Thursday, the union membership will meet at 12:00 p.m. to discuss possible reactions, and at 2 p.m. Rider's president will address all employees. Anticipating a breakdown of negotiations, Rider Administration has posted job listings for part-time, temporary substitute instructors in all fields.

Scheiber's letter directed the board's attention to the way Administration's fluctuating budget projections have been used to justify rash actions including the "unprecedented attempt to sell" a significant branch of the university, Westminster Choir College, Rider's acclaimed school of music.

President Scheiber noted that faculty morale has diminished. A poll conducted by the AAUP this summer found 83 percent of bargaining unit employees were dissatisfied with the direction of the university, and 69 percent were considering leaving. Scheiber called those numbers "shocking for an institution of higher learning" and noted that, should the sentiment continue, it would lead to serious problems for faculty recruitment and retention which would lead to further problems at the University.

Rider current president Greg Dell'Omo began his tenure at Rider by attempting to lay off faculty and eliminate 13 fields of study in October 2015, just his third month on the job – decisions that were reversed in response to concessions from faculty. Last Spring faculty voted no confidence in President Dell'Omo and his financial team.

Scheiber's letter states that Rider faculty recognizes the financial difficulties facing Rider. Rider's faculty has offered significant concessions, she said: the extension of a wage freeze to six years without a raise, "reductions in pension benefits to a point below all of our peer institutions, significant decreases in institutional support of scholarship, reductions in health insurance benefits, and structural changes that give administration total control over replacement hiring."

Scheiber urged the board of trustees to play a role in correctly interpreting data and helping the two sides work together.

"The current adversarial relationship between administration and faculty does not bode well," she pointed out in her letter to trustees. "Only by faculty and administration working together in a collaborative relationship can we provide a future for the university. We urge you to take direct and positive steps to avert a crisis this fall."

attachment: full text of letter to board