

February 26, 2024

Dear Group of Concerned WSU Faculty,

We are writing as elected faculty representatives of the Vancouver campus's advocacy organization, the Council of Faculty Representatives, who, too, are "concerned." Know, however, that our concerns focus on two erroneous points you made in your letter, "Time for a Change at WSU:" 1) that "regional" campuses are "largely teaching intensive" and the merger of "affiliated" campuses with the Pullman campus, which occurred due to OneWSU, has led to the "decline" in WSU's rankings and reputation, and 2) low enrollment is happening only at affiliated campuses and resulting in a lack of investment in Pullman.

Point #1. Research at Vancouver

WSU Vancouver was founded in 1989 to "be a positive force in bettering the lives of the people of Southwest Washington and beyond by contributing *outstanding research*" (our emphasis) ("WSU Vancouver Mission"). In fact, our research mission was mandated by the Washington Legislature and is documented in the Higher Education Branch Campuses in Washington State: Interim Report (https://www.wsipp.wa.gov/ReportFile/813/Wsipp_Higher-Education-Branch-Campuses-in-Washington-State-Interim-Report_Full-Report.pdf). Thus, we take our research mission seriously and are proud of the output and productivity of our two endowed chairs, 10 distinguished professors, seven Fulbright faculty, and the 101 tenure-track faculty, and the 28 Career-Track Scholarly faculty who have contributed to the vitality of this mission. Likewise, we are proud that our grant expenditures amount to currently \$6M but continues to grow annually. Like your Pullman faculty, our Vancouver faculty have been awarded large external grants from federal agencies like NIH, NSF, DoD, US Forest Service, US Fish & Wildlife, NEH, along with support from prestigious foundations, such as the Andrew W. Mellon, the Alfred P. Sloan, the Murdock Trust, and the Society of American Archivists. Additionally, we are proud that our faculty have been awarded four patents and that three entrepreneurial activities have been generated from research undertaken in our labs. Finally, we are proud that our research mission has been buoyed by our doctoral and master-level students. In 2023 we awarded 46 doctoral and have a total of 80 graduate students in research programs (re: not MIT/MED teaching programs). Thus, we are proud that the Vancouver campus is positively and emphatically contributing to the reputation of WSU as a R1 Research Institution.

Point #2: Low Enrollment Leading to the Lack of Investment in Pullman

While we also lament the lack of funds for investing in our campus, we also are aware that this problem is due to factors that have nothing to do with the merger of OneWSU. COVID, the "enrollment cliff," the misperception that a college degree has no value, and other factors have led to low enrollment even at flagship campuses. The current \$100M in cuts at Penn State is a case in point: <https://www.highereddive.com/news/penn-state-cuts-budget-2026/705542/>.

Here is what we are seeing: The Vancouver campus budget shortfall amounts to \$4 million, and hiring in our departments has been stopped in response to it; however, departments in Pullman, where the deficit is over \$100 million, continue with hiring Tenure-Track faculty, transitioning

Career-Track faculty to the Tenure-Track, and giving retention packages to Career-Track faculty to remain in Pullman. In respect to funding, with the exception of System support for specific initiatives aimed at outreach and building capacity available to all WSU campuses, the Vancouver campus does *not* take money from the Pullman campus; rather, it *pays* Pullman an annual franchise fee for use of resources, to the amount of 11%, annually. Additionally, following EP-2, 49.5% of the F&A generated from our grants remains in Pullman (<https://policies.wsu.edu/prf/index/manuals/executive-policy-manual/ep02/>), meaning Vancouver supports research beyond our own campus. Moreover, our annual budget, like Pullman's, is tied to enrollment. If our enrollment declines as it has (it is currently at 2.2%), we do not receive an influx of funds from Pullman to shore up our deficits. Put simply, we own our losses just as Pullman owns its losses. Put more pointedly: Vancouver's enrollment does not impact the livelihood and well-being of Pullman's finances.

Faculty across the WSU System are brilliant researchers, all. Rather than pointing fingers, diminishing the value of one other, denigrating faculty due to the mere fact they work outside of Pullman, and ultimately driving us apart, we should be *working together* to solve the great problems facing our System. The question we at WSU Vancouver ask you to consider is, "How do we address lack of investment and low morale in a way that empowers *all* campuses to fully contribute to the research mission of the System?" We end our letter by saying that we do agree with you that faculty should demand to participate in solving the problems, but we believe we should do it *together* as colleagues who care about WSU and each other's well-being.

With sincere regards,
The Council of Faculty Representatives
Washington State University Vancouver