

41-2-26
April 14, 1989

Mr. Jim Heap
House of Representatives
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Representative Heap:

I write as your constituent, in respect to problems at the University. Health Sciences at the University have been quiet in all the news about flight of faculty, but not because there are no difficulties. I am Director of the Division of Epidemiology in the School of Public Health and Principal Investigator of some sizable research projects at the University, The Minnesota Heart Health Program, and others. We are a 90% self-supporting, teaching and research unit that brings into the state 12 to 15 million in external support on State support of approximately 1 million dollars annually. Despite successful enterprise and self-support, and visible contributions to the prevention of disease and promotion of health throughout Minnesota, our faculty suffer the same severe salary constraints of the larger campus, including raises that have not kept up with inflation over the last twenty years. We have this remarkable situation now in which to recruit needed new faculty we must pay them more than our incumbent faculty, faculty of longer experience and demonstrated performance. The market has truly moved ahead of us at the University!

Furthermore, because of the mission of the School of Public Health, and the fact that we do not practice clinical medicine, we do not have the private practice associations that allow the Medical School to retain its effective teaching and research faculty. Our School and faculty are thus at a terrible disadvantage locally and nationally because of the poor salary scales and weak merit raise funds and policies.

Our reputation and productivity here have, until last year, allowed us to recruit successfully and we had no major departures or uncertainty about faculty involvement. In the past year, however, that situation has changed, due mainly to the relatively low salaries and almost meaningless "merit" raises for faculty; but also because of a perceived lack of understanding of the major contribution the Health Sciences make to the University and State (in scholarship, teaching, service and in indirect cost recovery funds); and because of the perceived lack of commitment of the State to the future of the University.

Our Division lost this year, to another institution (for these and related reasons), an outstanding leader from our faculty, our Director of Graduate Studies. We also have significant unrest among younger professors who are being actively courted by other schools. Without change, the next erosion will surely be in loss of our most effective faculty and a lessened

ability to attract new people.

With this steadily deteriorating situation, in the face of the turnaround toward improved University management, the Health Sciences and particularly the School of Public Health faculty need to see something hopeful (and tangible) on the horizon. Without improvement, we will surely have to think of new and more innovative ways of carrying out our research activities, in other institutions or outside the University, and thus lose critical input to the training mission of the University.

This may be the first time that you have heard this sort of news from the Health Sciences which has continued steadfastly over the years, and recently, during the administrative confusion at the University, to maintain a strong local, national and international contribution and high credibility for the University of Minnesota. We have continued to bring substantial research enterprise into this State while meeting our larger mission in teaching and in the public health.

We hope that you will consider intervening with the Appropriations and Education and Health Committees so that Health Science units can continue to function effectively in their academic mission. Our faculty are impressed with the new leadership that Hasselmo and Donhowe are providing. We go on as before with our daily business. But the strain of severely restricted pay levels and raises, particularly as imposed on a faculty that largely supports itself, and, in addition, brings so much "healthy" enterprise to Minnesota, has become critical. The University and the State will surely soon suffer.

Sincerely,



Henry Blackburn, MD
Professor

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