

September 27, 2009

*In light of the current university and state budget downturns, Miami faculty recently expressed concerns to the university's board of trustees about prioritized spending regarding scholarships, faculty and renovation and construction. As a means of letting the full Miami community know how the board considers its decisions, board chair John Christie has written this open letter.*

To the Miami University Community,

Miami University has faced difficult challenges throughout its 200-year history, and the current economic situation once again requires hard financial decisions to respond to shrinking financial resources. In this challenging time, it is more important than ever that the Board work with the President and the Miami community to affirm the mission and vision of the University and the long-range strategic priorities that will move us forward. On behalf of Miami's Trustees, I want to confirm the Board's principles when making these difficult decisions.

First, the academic success of our students is at the heart of our mission and our main priority. A faculty and staff committed to academic excellence and undergraduate instruction is a testament to this priority. When tough financial choices were required over the past year, we did everything possible to support academic excellence, making reductions in these budgets when no other alternatives remained. This approach to prioritizing academic excellence will continue to guide our fiscal choices.

Second, the Board takes its stewardship of the University very seriously. Trustees are committed to assuring fiscally responsible planning and decision-making. This means developing plans that do not undermine the academic priorities of the institution or place undue financial burdens on the University or its students while keeping the long-term vision of the University foremost in mind.

Third, the lifelong success of Miami graduates is formed by the totality of their experiences while at Miami. Classroom experiences go hand-in-hand with extracurricular experiences and student involvement, the hallmark of a Miami education over our entire history.

Thus, the Board is firmly committed to the Student Housing Renovation Project and the construction of the Bicentennial Student Center. Both projects are critical to the totality of the Miami Experience for current and future students. But given our stewardship responsibilities, while preliminary planning will continue, the projects will be pursued only after financially responsible plans have been formulated to pay for them that do not unduly burden the University's operating budget.

Each of us feels the impact of the extraordinarily difficult and uncertain times we are living in today. The rate of change in our lives is extremely high and it causes insecurity and doubt. In times like this, it is extremely important that we all pull together as a community – to shape Miami's future and to continue to provide the same Miami Experience to students that we have throughout our history.

John Christie  
Chair, Board of Trustees