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From: HUCTW Info  
Sent: Monday, January 23, 2012  
Subject: Library Transition: HUCTW Concerns & Next Steps

Dear HUCTW Members,

Like you, HUCTW leaders were very concerned by what we heard at the Harvard Library Town Hall meetings on Thursday. The announcement that the Library workforce “will be smaller than it is now” and that some of these potential reductions will be involuntary, combined with the lack of answers to critical questions was alarming and ill-conceived. Additionally, the invitation to staff members to fill out employee profiles without knowing exactly why or how they would be used was confusing. For many, the overall effect was panic-inducing.

We wanted to get in touch with you to let you know that we will be meeting with Harvard Library transition leaders to get more information and express our serious concerns. We want to find out why Harvard believes these staffing reductions are necessary and how these changes would truly create a more efficient, service-oriented, technologically-robust Library when staffing levels in many areas are already at a critical low. If proposed staffing changes are not based on fiscal necessity, why do they need to be on such an expedited timeline? In our Agreement, Harvard has committed to making every effort to ensure the security of employment. Although we acknowledge that the University has a right to reorganize and reprioritize, managers also have a responsibility to work with our Union and its members on those plans. In our Union's experience, it is nearly always possible to meet the same ends without any involuntary layoffs.

We also plan to set up local meetings of members to talk with you about your specific concerns and strategize about next steps. We will send out dates very soon. We may wait to schedule these meetings with you until we have had at least one post-Town Hall meeting with HL leaders so that we can have a more informed conversation.

In the meantime, two things you should know:

Harvard must initiate a union-management consultation with HUCTW before laying off a single HUCTW staff member – this is required by the HUCTW contract. During these conversations, reasons for the proposed layoff must be discussed in detail, and alternatives to layoff must be seriously explored. Based on the vague information and dates presented on Thursday, it seems that Harvard is not prepared to talk about specific positions and staff members, but we are reaching out to HL leaders to have a broader conversation about why involuntary layoffs are needed at all.

At the 9:00 am Town Hall meeting, someone asked if the staffing plans announced on Thursday had been discussed with the Union. The correct answer is no. Since early on in the Transition, we have met with Library leaders on multiple occasions in order to (1) encourage staff participation whenever possible in decisions about our work, (2) urge Harvard to train current staff for new roles rather than hiring externally, and (3) if it is determined that staff reductions are absolutely necessary, allow this to happen through attrition and other voluntary shifts. But Thursday's announcement – about the plan for involuntary and voluntary layoffs, the need to apply for your own position if it has changed significantly, and the invitation to fill out the ambiguously “voluntary” employee profiles – was not discussed with HUCTW. We will obviously be talking about all of these things at our meetings with Harvard Library leaders, which we hope will happen in the very immediate future.

We will be in touch again soon. Please don't hesitate to email or call if you want to share thoughts and ask questions.

Thank you, HUCTW

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