

香港浸會大學教職員工會

Hong Kong Baptist University Faculty and Staff Union

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Newsletter (135)

Letter to our President from A Staff

March 6, 2006

Dear Colleagues,

This is a letter we received recently inquires about the dispensing of bonuses within various departments. One colleague even sent us an open letter to our President, Prof. Ng. We call forth Prof. Ng to answer questions raised in this letter. Here we translated it to English for some non-Chinese readers.

Thank you for your attention.

Executive Committee
Hong Kong Baptist University Faculty and Staff Union

Feb 6th, 2006

RE: Prof. Ng: What Wrong Have I Done?

Dear Prof. Ng,

After reading Prof. Ng's "Developments at HKBU" broadcast recently, I cannot help but ask, "Why should the University treat us in such inhuman ways, we those who have joined the NPRS on Jan. 1st, 2006?"

Firstly, we have joined the NPRS based on our support for the BU's development in face of government funding cut leveled at the universities. However, what happen these days really enrages staff like me. Has not the University administration repeatedly stressed that the BU is about to face severe structural budget deficit? However, only 2 months into the full implementation of the NPRS, various schools / faculties and departments cannot wait long enough / have hastened to give out bonuses to their staff. In view of such bizarre scenario, I have the following questions to ask you kindly to respond:

1. In the radio programme “A Letter from Hong Kong”, you said that the University’s funding had been slashed by more than 20 percent in recent years. Why the University keeps saying that there is serious structural deficit on the one hand, while several million dollars can be spared to give to a fraction of colleagues in the form of bonus on the other hand?
2. Based on what grounds did those departments and faculties / schools give out bonus to their colleagues? What criteria are used to determine the amount of bonus each one gets?
3. When departments and faculties / schools give out bonus to their colleagues, do they need to publicize all the figures? In the future and under the new structure, will the University be operated under a black-box of the same kind?

As a member of the University, we have served the university and be supportive of the Whole Person education ideal, from the early days of private college to the public-funded university today, toiling and deliberating, without being lax. Today, the BU use the pretext of structural budget deficit and de-link to cut the salary of us low-ranking staff! And before all the details of the NPRS has yet to be spelt out, the University can give away several million dollars to some staff! Is this the kind of “better utilization of public fund”, that arises from such “good opportunity to reform some of the outmoded practice and abuses of the old structure”?

Initially the Personnel Office has promised that pay and bonus would be given out according to performance. But now such departments and faculties / schools are to give out bonuses across the board as a fraction of the staff’s monthly or yearly salary. These initial signs show that such bonuses have nothing to do with individual performance. Then how can the administration prove to the public and the taxpayers that such bonuses demonstrate that ALL staff deserve them? Some staff have queried the administration about the details of the reward and punishment scheme in the NPRS, and stressed that we cannot make transition to a new structure that is unclear in details. Such bonus-givings also contravene what the administration has practiced all along – that if a staff does not perform well or commits mistakes often, then the superior can suggest improvement targets and even give out warnings, and in the end even terminate employment contract based on these. Therefore, it is impossible that bonuses be given out arbitrarily without any performance appraisal in so initial a period of the implementation of the new structure. This is hardly acceptable.

Prof. Ng, you demand that we low-ranking staff be slashed in our salaries, then you allow some departments to give out bonuses in proportion across their whole board, the result would inevitably be the fattening of the higher ranking staff within such departments. Is this not a case of “fattening the higher people and starving the lowly ones”? The meager fraction of salary we get back from the bonus is far not enough to cover the slashing in salary when we joined the NPRS! But you people in the higher administration not only do not need to take salary cut, but can even get higher bonuses according to a ratio of your high salary! Have you guys ever considered the feeling of the low-ranking staff?

In these days the Legislative Councilors have demanded that you and the higher

administration let the 2 dismissed non-teaching staff resume their work. Have you really reflected deeply on this demand, or rather have you turned a deaf ear to this? Why we still cannot see any definitive action taken? Be clear that such inaction will send a cold-blooded and intransigent impression of the BU administration to the public, and this will surely be detrimental to the BU! Before the administration have extended any remedy to these 2 dismissed staff, you have busied yourselves with bonus-giving. Are such actions your actions of public accountability? Oh what a flexible NPRS that you have achieved! So flexible that you can do such shit things, that is really eye-opening to all! We are not now talking about the issue of U Council Chairman overlooking conflict of interests in subcontracting consultancy work from the University, we are now talking about that you higher people can blatantly give out bonuses to yourselves. Don't you know that such flexible maneuver of the NPRS would instill deep-seated antagonism and conflicts between higher and lower-ranking staff? How sad and lamentable!

Your highly flexible way of dispensing with the public fund has inadvertently fattened yourselves, and can you face the taxpayers in Hong Kong? The deep-seated antagonism of the Hong Kong society is exactly being wrought by higher people who only know how to fatten themselves and starve their inferiors, who do not know how to love and protect them, who do not know how to shoulder difficulties in solidarity with the lower ranks, and totally lack commitment to the longer future of the society. Such higher people as the elite of Hong Kong!

Would that you hasten, amid of unimaginable busy-ness, to answer such queries deep within our hearts.

Best wishes,

A staff suffering cuts that are turned into other staff's bonuses