

A Declaration of Declining Confidence in the Leadership of President Harvey Kesselman and Provost Lori Vermeulen

We, the united members of the Stockton Faculty, express our declining confidence in the Stockton University Administration and the leadership of President Harvey Kesselman and Provost Lori Vermeulen.

Stockton University has a long and proud tradition of cooperation and collaboration between the Faculty and the Administration. This record of constructive shared governance has strengthened and enriched Stockton and helped define a unique institution with a noted commitment to an engaging, rich, and interdisciplinary liberal arts education, and a professional culture that values collaboration and shared decision-making.

However, we have grown gravely concerned with the current Administration's apparent unwillingness to ensure the continuation of this tradition, and the mutual respect and transparency necessary for the shared governance of this university. In particular, we are dismayed that:

The Stockton Administration has defined a pattern of decision making and policy announcements that have not allowed or encouraged full faculty participation, and frequently dismiss faculty concerns and interests with little or no genuine dialogue. The Administration seems to have adopted a belief that consultation with the faculty is at most an unfortunate necessity to be undertaken superficially and quickly on the way toward a predetermined end.

Dr. Kesselman's Administration has demonstrated an increasing lack of transparency in its undertakings, announcing major changes in policies and administrative structure with little or no forewarning and no effort to ensure full and complete participation from the faculty in the planning and decision-making process.

Dr. Kesselman's Administration seems to have adopted a series of changes in practices that suggest an overarching trend toward fewer opportunities for shared governance, a general disempowering of the faculty in the decision-making process, and a declining voice for faculty members in the shaping of the University's future course.

Rather than address the need for change as an opportunity to build cooperation, community and trust, and thereby foster a collective ownership of the planning process, we have observed troubling patterns with communication that have fostered confusion, alienation, distrust, and a general erosion of morale.

As a result, our collective concern for the future of Stockton is growing, and our confidence in Dr. Kesselman's and Provost Vermeulen's leadership is waning.

We call on Dr. Kesselman to change course and to adopt a new commitment to cooperative and transparent governance that can allow us to collectively shape a more promising future for Stockton. We call for a clear and genuine shift in practices and policies that will empower the voice of the faculty in the decision-making process, and support a full and rich dialogue on the future of Stockton and the nature of its institutions and administration. We call for the renewal of a professional culture of transparency, respect, and genuine collaboration in the governance of Stockton University.