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UA revamp may reduce women, minority staff

Those workers often on lower rung, first to go

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University of Arizona President Robert N. Shelton was queried twice about his commitment to diversity during public forums about UA's proposed reorganization.

Each time, Shelton said he was fully committed to maintaining UA's diversity at all levels of the university.

Yet an unintended side effect of UA's Transformation Plan may be a decrease in campus diversity because the employees most vulnerable to layoffs are disproportionately minority or women.

Oscar Angulo, an administrative assistant in the Chicano/Hispano Student Affairs Office, is a single father who said he struggles to pay his mortgage each month.

"It's just scary to know something you thought would be for sure, like your job, is going to be in jeopardy," he said.

"We always know there is a risk, but this reorganization is surprisingly fast. We (staff members) didn't know it would be to such a big extent. It is really, really stressful."

Jeanne Davenport, a senior program coordinator at UA's Center for Judaic Studies, echoed Angulo's sentiments.

"What we're hearing is the cuts will come from the bottom up and the reality of the campus is that it's mostly women and minorities at the bottom."

Juan Garcia, UA's vice president for instruction and dean of University College, said he understands the fear of minority and female staff members.

"The strata that exist in our society in general show that women and minorities often occupy the lowest rung and are often the first to go. . . . If you're just looking at sheer numbers, those are the ones most impacted," he said. "Things are so intensive this time because the larger society isn't providing a safety net."

UA is Tucson's second-largest employer, with about 14,600 employees. Of that number, 40 percent are classified staff, according to the most recent figures from UA's Office of Institutional Research and Planning Support as reported in the 2007 Factbook.

Those nearly 5,900 employees include Davenport and Angulo and range from groundskeepers to secretaries to computer technicians. Slightly more than 31 percent are of minority heritage and 62 percent are women.

By comparison, 15 percent of the nearly 1,600 tenure and tenure-track faculty are minority and 32 percent are

women.

Arizona Board of Regents policy allows for layoffs of tenured faculty "upon reorganization when determined to be necessary due to budgetary or programmatic considerations requiring program discontinuance, curtailment, modification or redirection."

However, Shelton said in an e-mail to the Tucson Citizen on Tuesday that "We will definitely protect tenure and tenure-eligible faculty."

Tenure and tenure-track faculty are about 11 percent of UA's employees. When adjunct faculty, lecturers and instructors - part-time positions not immune from layoffs - are included, UA's instructional faculty account for 19 percent of UA workers.

Administrators - deans, vice deans, vice presidents and vice provosts - are not immune to cutbacks, Garcia said. However, if they are also tenured faculty, they would be able to return to teaching "at a pay cut," he said.

Executive administrators - Shelton and Provost Meredith Hay, for instance - are in a different category, in that they may have multi-year contracts and are hired for a specific job that does not necessarily correspond with a move back to faculty status.

Women represent 33 percent of all UA administrators, and minorities make up 14 percent.

Colin Deeds, a program coordinator for UA's Center for Latin American Studies, said he thinks he is relatively safe because his job is partially funded by a federal grant.

"But I know other staff who are women and minority and there's definitely a concern," Deeds said. "It's only logical - if you look at the low end of the pay scale, more employees are minorities and women. And yet they just hired that med school leader at what? Six-fifty? That's like 19 of my positions."

UA hired William M. Crist as vice president for health affairs in August to oversee medical campuses in Tucson and Phoenix. His annual salary is \$650,000 and he will start Oct. 31. Although one of Crist's first jobs was to hire deans for the two medical campuses, UA said this week those two administrative positions will not be filled this year.

Garcia said UA's commitment to diversity is demonstrated by the committees that keep an eye on how women and minorities are treated at UA and advise university leadership of concerns.

The Diversity Resource Office reports to Garcia, and Shelton has advisory councils representing racial minorities, women, and lesbian, gay and transgender groups in the UA community.

As news of the Transformation Plan has spread, the groups have been "very concerned that there's some thought given to the people who might be affected most," Garcia said. He said the groups are monitoring the transformation process carefully and that Shelton and Hay "are very well aware of that."

Brittany Caza, an administrative assistant in the Center for Latin American Studies, hopes that is true.

"My husband is a first-year law student and they don't want you to work because the first year is such a demanding schedule, so I support us," Caza said. "I started two months ago and I'm on probation for the first six months and can be laid off for any reason during that time. I wouldn't be so afraid if there were other jobs out there, but there aren't right now."

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Garcia said he was unaware of any specific plan to try to keep a certain percentage of women and minorities employed in light of possible layoffs, "but I'm advising people that we can't lose sight of our goals and our central commitment here at UA to diversity."

Garcia was firm that there would be no reverse discrimination either.

"We have to look at performance, mission fit, at the system as a whole and not just target specific tasks or positions," he said.

In his e-mail Tuesday, Shelton said that UA's "commitment to diversity in staff, faculty and students will not be compromised.

"Layoffs, if needed, will be done with sensitivity to individuals and with as much assistance as we can provide for transition to new opportunities," he wrote. "These are certainly difficult times."

On the public television show *Arizona Illustrated* on Friday, Hay was asked about her commitment to diversity since the classified staff is heavily weighted with women and minorities who have less job security during UA's reorganization.

"I think we have to be very careful as we go through this process," Hay replied. "As we look at . . . (mergers), as we restaff these new structures, if you will, at the university, that all employees have the opportunity to apply for these new positions as they're created. Certainly we want to maintain our diversity."By the numbers - UA employee groups by percentage*:

Classified: 40 percent

Graduate assistants: 20 percent

Appointed professionals: 19 percent

Faculty: 19 percent

Administrators: 2 percent

UA minority representation

As a percentage of administrators: 14 percent

As a percentage of tenured or tenure-track faculty: 15 percent

As a percentage of all faculty: 14.7 percent

As a percentage of classified staff: 31 percent

UA female representation

As a percentage of administrators: 33 percent

As a percentage of tenured faculty: 32 percent

As a percentage of all faculty: 36.8 percent

Those workers often on lower rung, first to go

As a percentage of classified staff: 62 percent

* 2007 figures, the latest available

These percentages do not include foreign nationals at UA as employees or students and employees who did not provide ethnicity information.

Source: UA 2007 Factbook; UA Office of Institutional Research and Planning Support

Caption: Oscar Angulo, administrative assistant in the UA's Chicano/Hispano Student Affairs Office, chats with student worker Ray Larez in the office Monday. Angulo is one of UA's 5,900 classified staff. About 31 percent of classified staff are minorities. The department of language, reading and culture in the UA's College of Education received an Inclusive Excellence Award on Friday. The ceremony was coordinated by UA's Diversity Resources Office, which encourages inclusiveness at all levels of UA. FROM LEFT: clinical associate professor David Betts, department head Norma Gonzalez, administrative assistant Virginia Gonzalez and graduate coordinator Maria Fierro with a poster announcing their award.

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