

August 16, 2023

Memorandum

FROM: Undersigned faculty

TO: President Bilger

RE: Non-teaching staff

We are writing to express our deep concerns regarding recent developments involving non-teaching staff at the college. While we appreciate your message of July 21, we worry that not enough attention is being paid to issues pertaining – both directly and indirectly – to faculty in particular and to the academic program in general. Our concerns have been prompted, in part, by the sudden departures of several respected Faculty Administrative Coordinators, which amounts to the loss of fully one-third of the Faculty Administrative Coordinator staff. Our understanding is that at least two of them have left in no small measure because of their profound disappointment with the ways in which they have been treated by the administration pertaining, but not limited, to questions of remuneration and respect for their experience and commitment to Reed's academic mission. Our understanding, moreover, is that serious feelings of disaffection are not peculiar to those individuals but are, in fact, widely shared among non-teaching staff. Indeed, the Art Department has seen several recent and related resignations in the Cooley Gallery, and in the Visual Resource Center. The loss of these staff is deeply troubling for the departments and programs that they served. These were superb colleagues whose contributions to the success of our programs can hardly be overstated. But to the degree that staff dissatisfactions are indeed widespread, it seems that we are facing nothing less than a major institutional crisis.

The college's long-standing traditions of democracy and equity require that all members of the college, very much including non-teaching staff, be treated with the greatest respect and dignity. Non-teaching staff are not mere employees, they are essential partners and colleagues in the pursuit of our mission, which is, of course, to provide the best possible undergraduate education. In this sense, non-teaching staff should be viewed as important members of a mission-driven community who should find their work deeply rewarding and, indeed, joyful. This has long been one of the defining features of Reed. To the degree that it no longer obtains – to the degree, for example, that "best practices" of personnel management have been imported from the outside – we no longer recognize the college. It is no exaggeration to say that this is not merely a personnel crisis but an existential one.

We are pleased that you will be convening a group of senior staff members to pursue these issues. However, we believe that direct faculty involvement is also absolutely essential. We respectfully request that you ask each of the five divisions to nominate one of their divisional colleagues to serve with senior staff as permanent members of the study group.

Signed,