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## 2003 UNOPA Letter to John Wunder, President

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December 16, 2003

John Wunder, President  
Academic Senate  
420 University Terrace  
City Campus 0684

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Dear John:

Thank you for forwarding to me the resolution of the Executive Committee of the Senate supporting UAAD's and UNOPA's request to have voting representation on the Academic Planning Committee. I certainly share with the Executive Committee a deep appreciation for the vital role that staff play in the functioning of this university. There is no question that members of those organizations bring a very important perspective to many important issues that face the University. I have personally, and through Herb Howe, remained in close contact with UNOPA and UAAD and have generally solicited the views of staff throughout the budget cutting process. I probably have received more specific suggestions for budget savings from staff than I have from faculty and have considered each one. However, I do not agree with the recommendation to place one voting member each on APC from UAAD and UNOPA, especially when it comes with a recommendation to further dilute the administrative representation and, thus, to upset the balance that has served us well in the past. Let me articulate further my thinking on this matter.

The Academic Planning Committee is, from my perspective, a central aspect of shared governance. It is charged with working with the administration to chart the future direction of our academic programs. Proposed budget reductions are one of the many charges assigned to APC, because of the unique role faculty play in our system of university governance. Your proposal, in my view, misperceives the basis for shared governance. Faculty share in governance matters, not because they are "employees" but because they bring essential expertise to the construction and implementation of academic programs in a multi-disciplinary university. As critical as non-faculty staff are to the success of UNL, to argue that the perspective of non-faculty staff should have a voice at the same table as faculty in charting the academic course of the university, totally undermines the basis for shared governance, and, in my view, has the potential of weakening the faculty's claim to participation in academic decision-making.

While I am reluctant to make this argument because I respect the leadership of UAAD and UNOPA and often rely on them to present the views of non-faculty staff, these two valuable organizations differ in another fundamental manner from the Academic Senate and the Academic Assembly. Namely, every member of the faculty has the opportunity to vote for

her/his representation on the Academic Senate—whether they choose to do so or not. Hence, at least theoretically, every faculty member has the right to participate in the process that leads to shared governance. In contrast, both UAAD and UNOPA are private organizations that only represent their dues-paying members. My understanding is they represent only a small percentage of the eligible staff.

In short, I am surprised that the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate would make such a radical proposal – one that could at least be interpreted as undermining the special role that faculty have in directing the future of the University.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Harvey".

Harvey Perlman  
Chancellor and Harvey and Susan Perlman  
Alumni Association Professor of Law