March 11, 2020

As AFT professionals that are integral to the operations at Rutgers University, we appreciate that the University has been sending out regular communications on how it’s handling COVID-19. Though we acknowledge that the Task Force has been working hard, we believe that the communications at this time outline measures that are either incomplete or incoherent and do not address many of the concerns that we have as a unified group of university employees.

Governor Murphy declared a State of Emergency on the evening March 9, 2020. According to Executive Order No. 103, “6. I authorize and empower the executive head of any agency or instrumentality of the State government with authority to promulgate rules to waive, suspend, or modify any existing rule, where the enforcement of which would be detrimental to the public welfare during this emergency, notwithstanding the provisions of the Administrative Procedure Act or any law to the contrary for the duration of this Executive Order, subject to my prior approval and in consultation with the State Director of Emergency Management and the Commissioner of DOH. Any such waiver, modification, or suspension shall be promulgated in accordance with N.J.S.A. App. A:9-45.”

In light of the evolving public health crisis, we are asking for an immediate expansion of policies and procedures to protect the health and public welfare of the entire University community. To that end, the University should immediately implement the following demands:

- Immediately add to the membership of University Task Force on COVID-19 to include representatives of all AAUP and AFT locals; URA, HPAE, PTLFC, AAUP-AFT and AAUP-BHSNJ
- Share with us the current task force membership and organizational chart along with any protocols for decision making
- Provide the University’s safety protocols and training that are currently followed
- Provide the specific safety measures that prevent infection at work and protocols for employees at higher risk of complications due to infection
- Provide the additional cleaning protocols that have been shared with facilities staff
- Provide the symptom and exposure reporting protocol that is in place
- Expand telecommuting options to all staff regardless of FLSA status
- Cancel all non-essential in person staff meetings/events or move them to tele/video-conference
• Assure all employees that they will be paid in event of a voluntary/involuntary quarantine
• Assure all employees that they will be paid in event of a shutdown
• Proactively create emergency scheduling with our unions to reduce uncertainty and continue operations
• Provide infection control supplies such as tissues, disposable face shields, surface disinfectants and hand sanitizer to all departments immediately
• Provide the proper PPE to all workers, including N95 masks and other equipment for healthcare workers
• Identify quarantine locations and plans on who will service those quarantined
• Provide immediate access to Rutgers health clinics and free testing and treatment to all employees regardless of health insurance status
• Issue a moratorium on enacting any discipline regarding absence

If the University refuses to implement any of these demands, the unions demand to negotiate. We represent over 15,000 employees here at Rutgers University. Without our work, this institution could not function as the preeminent research University that we are today. We deserve to be part of the planning that will impact our work and our lives.

In solidarity,

URA, HPAE, PTLFC, AAUP-AFT and AAUP-BHSNJ