

Statement by Paul Haber
President University Faculty Association

As prepared for delivery

August 24, 2017

Today the University Faculty Association filed an official grievance accusing the University of Montana of violating its own policy in how it treats Lecturers on campus. It is a decision we regret, but find unavoidable given the administration's decision to not adhere to its rules.

Lecturers are critical faculty members who teach many of the General Education and highest enrolled courses. They have usually demonstrated themselves to be effective and caring teachers and therefore the university created a special policy for them. These teachers are offered annual contracts – as opposed to the course-by-course assignments made to most adjuncts – and if that contract is not to be renewed, the lecturer is told a semester before his or her annual appointment. This gives the faculty member time to find another institution and the university time to ensure another faculty member can teach their course.

This year, on almost the eve of the new semester, the University sent out a letter to many of these faculty members telling them their employment would end at the end of the fall semester. It seems the University adhered to the semester's notice, but ignored the annual appointment part of the policy. They should have, under the policy they adopted just in March, sent such letters out before the spring semester began in January of this year that they would not receive a new annual appointment.

When the administration informed us of their plans, we sought to negotiate an alternative process. We understand the difficult financial situation the campus finds itself in and hoped we could develop a memorandum of understanding that might allow the university to reduce the number of lecturers while respecting their commitment. They chose not to negotiate with us and now we find ourselves in the position of having to file this grievance to remedy the situation.

And since the letter went out we have had numerous first-person accounts about deans having conversations with some lecturers about teaching in the spring. Some have received and signed annual contracts. The president has publicly stated that she knows some lecturers will be returning to teach.

We still hope to avoid arbitration, but also insist the University abide by its own policies. This is not how we hoped to start such a critical semester at the University of Montana, but we are left with no other option.

A copy of the grievance will be made available to all members of the UFA and the media.