

Duke, Don't DOGE!

Dear President Price and Members of the Duke University Administration,

As of Monday, May 12th, the Duke administration has begun implementing a massive round of layoffs. We, the undersigned organizations, demand an immediate halt.

Duke is taking a Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) approach—treating this moment of crisis as an opportunity to downsize, shed workers, and protect institutional wealth at the expense of the people who make this university run. It's the same austerity playbook we've seen in the past at Duke and elsewhere—only this time, Duke is leading the charge.

Let's be clear: Duke is one of the first major universities in the country to enact sweeping layoffs across its workforce. This is a historic and devastating move. And while workers are losing their jobs, housing, healthcare, and immigration status, Duke's top administrators and athletics personnel continue to pull six- and seven-figure salaries. There are no cuts at the top. There's no shared sacrifice. Just more for them—and less for everyone else.

We are calling this what it is: institutional hoarding. Duke has administrators and athletics personnel who are making millions, a \$11.9 billion endowment^{1[1]}, and a \$2 billion hospital expansion^{2[2]} on the horizon. This is not about scarcity. This is about priorities. If this crisis is real, let its burden be shared equitably—not dumped on the backs of staff, grad workers, and precarious employees. That means an immediate, material, equitable redistribution of resources.

As a first step, we demand a voluntary 25% pay cut from those earning over \$1 million, and 10% from those earning between \$500,000 and \$1 million. A modest voluntary reduction from top earners alone could free up nearly \$6.6 million. This is not just a financial gesture—it's a moral imperative.

Furthermore, **we call on Duke University to open participatory budgeting sessions to all employees and students**, ensuring that those most directly impacted by these decisions have a meaningful voice in shaping the university's financial future.

You cannot preach community, care, and excellence while cutting the very people who make this university work.

We will not sit silently while Duke becomes a leader in academic austerity. The world is watching.

Duke, don't DOGE.

In solidarity,

Signatories:

The Duke Care Assembly

Duke Graduate Students Union

¹ Giving to Duke, Endowment: ["As of June 30, 2024, the university's endowment...\[totaled\] approximately \\$11.9 billion."](#)

² The Chronicle: ["Duke Health, UNC Health to partner on new \\$2 billion children's hospital in the Triangle."](#)

Duke Faculty Union
Duke University Press Workers Union
Duke AAUP Chapter
Duke Nicholas Queer Network
Duke Students For Justice in Palestine
Sunrise Undergraduate Association
Union of Southern Service Workers
Durham Workers Assembly
UE Local 150, NC Public Service Workers Union
Durham Association of Educators
North Carolina Association of Educators
North Carolina State AFL-CIO
Duke Respect Durham
Durham Rising
Triangle Healthcare Workers for Palestine
Duke Academics and Staff for Justice in Palestine
Jewish Voice for Peace Triangle Chapter
Mothers* for Ceasefire
Duke Jewish Solidarity Movement
Muslims for Social Justice
Migrant Roots Media
People's Power Lab

More on Duke, *Don't DOGE*:

We, the undersigned members of the Duke University community and the city of Durham, are writing to express our deep concern regarding the plan for staff layoffs that was announced by Executive Vice President Daniel Ennis during the University Leadership Webinar on Wednesday, April 30, 2025. **We firmly believe that the burden of this moment must be shared equitably through the redistribution of institutional resources to protect the livelihoods of those who make the university's mission possible.** If Duke refuses to use its endowment funds—or borrow against them—to protect the people who carry out its core educational mission, it betrays the very purpose of that endowment, which is to provide a “superior liberal education,” prepare students for “ethical service,” “advance knowledge,” and cultivate an intellectual community of “free and open inquiry.”^{3[3]} Faculty, staff, graduate workers, researchers, and students are essential to this

³ Duke University Mission Statement: <https://trustees.duke.edu/mission-statement/>

mission. **If the endowment is off-limits (for now), then those with the greatest financial security—senior administrators and top athletics personnel—must contribute proportionally to protect the most vulnerable.**

While it has been announced that layoffs will take place between now and the end of the summer, the broader Duke community has not been informed of the specific financial conditions driving these cuts. Instead, Duke's cost-reduction plan has been justified preemptively, based on the anticipation of potential cuts in federal funding. **We are concerned that Duke University is resorting to an all-too-familiar austerity playbook seen in previous crises**—one that relies on staff layoffs, hiring freezes, program and department cuts, raising tuition fees, and service consolidations, disproportionately affecting the university's most precarious workers while leaving top administrative salaries largely untouched. **We demand that, effective immediately, Duke University halt its planned summer 2025 layoffs**—including so-called “voluntary three-year buyouts”—and **adopt a crisis response model grounded in participatory decision-making and guided by the principles of equity, dignity, and justice.**

Compounding this lack of transparency is Duke's recent \$300 million acquisition of a medical facility^{4[4]}—an investment financed through significant institutional debt. Furthermore, the recent agreement to build the state's first standalone children's hospital in partnership with UNC comes with an expected cost of \$2 billion^{5[5]}. We are deeply concerned that these pre-existing financial commitments are now being used to justify sweeping cost-cutting measures, including layoffs, without a full public accounting of the rationale behind such decisions. As members of this community, and in the spirit of shared governance, we believe this financial information must be publicly disclosed. Furthermore, **we call on Duke University to open participatory budgeting sessions to all employees and students**, ensuring that those most directly impacted by these decisions have a meaningful voice in shaping the university's financial future.

The Duke workplace is extremely unequal. According to the data published on hr.duke.edu, a person working in a common staff position as a Program Coordinator made \$57,094 on average in 2024-2025. Housekeepers made \$42,037 on average. These people do the essential work of keeping our programs running and caring for our workspaces. Yet, they can't make nearly enough at Duke to meet their ever-increasing average cost of living in Durham (\$85,370 annually, for the basic needs of one adult and one child in Durham County^{6[6]}). At the same time, upper administrators are pulling salaries in the upper six—and even seven—figures. In Duke's unequal labor system, a small minority of administrators live luxury lifestyles based on profits from the exploited labor of the majority of workers, who are hardly meeting their basic needs.

In the absence of clarity regarding the university's finances and the urgency this moment requires, **we offer one immediate and concrete proposal that we believe represents the most equitable starting point: a voluntary 25% pay reduction from the university's highest-paid administrators earning more than \$1M and 10% from those earning between \$500,000 and \$1M.** There is precedent for the highest-paid employees to take a pay reduction. With the Covid-related economic downturn, in May 2020 the highest-

⁴ Duke Health, News & Media: [“Duke Health Completes Acquisition of Lake Norman Regional Medical Center.”](#)

⁵ The Chronicle: [“Duke Health, UNC Health to partner on new \\$2 billion children's hospital in the Triangle.”](#)

⁶ NC Budget & Tax Center, [2025 Living Income Standard for Durham County.](#)

compensated employees took reductions of 10-20%, which made a difference to employee morale and was a component of what the President described as “the best and most equitable path.” Similarly, today also this would not be merely a symbolic gesture, but a tangible and ethical contribution that would demonstrate leadership, accountability, and care for the broader Duke workforce. **It is a concrete act of solidarity** that would materially contribute to preserving jobs and maintaining the quality of education and services that define our institution.

Based on publicly available data from fiscal year 2022, **the top 29 earners at Duke—each making at least half a million dollars, and several earning well over \$1 million—received a combined \$11,087,789 in salary (with benefits, total compensation is three times as much, \$36,586,608). A modest voluntary reduction from top earners alone could free up more than \$6.6 million**—without touching the wages of those already most vulnerable. This is a significant amount that could be redirected toward preserving jobs and preventing layoffs:

1. Neal Triplett (President and CEO of DUMAC, Inc.): \$4,191,717
2. Mike Elko (Former Football Head Coach): \$3,843,212 (*Estimated Salary for new coach Manny Diaz: \$3,843,212)
3. Vincent Price (President): \$1,751,192
4. Jon Scheyer (Men’s Basketball Head Coach): \$1,665,386
5. John P. Mordach (Senior VP and Chief Financial Officer for Duke Health System): \$1,582,991 (*The salary for the new CFO, Lisa M. Goodlett, has not yet been published)
6. Evan Jones (DUMAC Investment Manager): \$1,542,028
7. Justin Nixon (DUMAC Investment Manager): \$1,518,911
8. Thomas A. Owens (Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Duke University Health System): \$1,441,308
9. Craig Albanese (Chief Executive Officer of Duke University Health System): \$1,407,490
10. Daniel Ennis (Executive Vice President): \$1,287,344
11. Mary Klotman (Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs & Dean of School of Medicine): \$1,235,581
12. Mark Corigliano (DUMAC Investment Manager): \$1,232,608 (*While Corigliano seems to have left in 2022, we assume his position was filled by a new manager)
13. Jeffrey M Ferranti (Chief Digital Officer and Senior Vice President): \$1,047,207
14. Kavita Nayar (DUMAC Investment Manager): \$1,031,804
15. Richard P. Shannon (Senior Vice President and Chief Medical Officer for Duke University Health System): \$991,774
16. Jennifer Francis (Executive Vice Provost): \$944,968
17. Sally Kornbluth (Provost): \$932,669 (*The salary for new Provost, Alec D. Gallimore, has not yet been published)
18. Scott Gibson (Executive Vice Dean of Administration, School of Medicine): \$854,623 (*The salary for the new Executive Vice Dean, Heather Hamby, has not yet been published)
19. Rhonda Brandon (Senior Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer for Duke University Health System): \$822,395

20. Monte Brown (Vice President of Administration, Duke University Health System): \$781,615 (*The salary for the new Vice President for Compliance and Administration, Colleen Shannon, has not yet been published)
21. Pamela Bernard (Vice President & University Counsel): \$772,765 (*The salary for the new Vice President and University Counsel, Kim Taylor, has not yet been published)
22. Keith Stover (Vice President of Finance, Chief Operating Officer, and Patient Revenue Management Organization, DUHS): \$715,086
23. Robert N. Willis (Vice President of Finance): \$684,760
24. Mary K. Martin (Chief Operating Officer, Duke University Hospital): \$679,639
25. Mary Ann Fuchs (Vice President for Patient Care, Chief Nursing Officer): \$625,223
26. Kathleen Galbraith (Part Year President of Duke Regional Hospital): \$619,635
27. Barbara Griffith (President, Duke Raleigh Hospital): \$612,137
28. Devdutta Sangvai (Part Year President of Duke Regional Hospital): \$539,265
29. Rachel Satterfield (Vice President of Finance, Controller, Treasurer): \$511,235

As an institution of higher education, Duke University's mission is to teach, research, and contribute to the production of knowledge. But as faculty, staff, graduate workers, researchers, other educators, and students, we cannot fulfill that mission if our basic material conditions and livelihoods are under threat. **When those who carry out the core labor of the university are placed in precarity, the entire academic enterprise is undermined.**

We ask this not with resentment, but with urgency and hope—for a university that lives up to its values by ensuring that those most vulnerable are not the ones targeted to bear the brunt of this crisis.