The continuing cutback of the academic budget challenges us--faculty and administration alike--to take positive steps to confront the crisis facing higher education. The crisis of contraction is real and promises to be with us for the remainder of the century. We are not only faced with a declining population base for "traditional" students but, additionally, there is some evidence that a smaller proportion of high school graduates are interested in attending college (The Milwaukee Journal, 6/13/79, p. 12). Accordingly, it behooves us to place the issue of contraction on the faculty agenda and to devise ways of dealing with it which are compatible with the integrity of the academic community and the mission of the university. The following comments are offered as a serious contribution to this end and as a stimulus for other ideas. Perhaps we should start by briefly reviewing the facts as regards the impact of the general crisis upon UWM and the College of Letters and Science in particular.

The College of Letters & Science surrendered 25 positions and $570,000 for fiscal 1979-80.* This comes on top of a reduction of 47 positions and about $1,000,000 in the 1977-79 biennium. Moreover, the College

* The campus as a whole surrendered a net total of 21 positions and $539,500. Letters & Science and the School of Education bore the brunt of the losses while Allied Health, Business Administration and Engineering and Applied Science each gained as a result of enrollment funding adjustments. See Attachment 1.
is presently preparing for yearly reductions in its base budget of 15 to 20 positions and $500,000 through the 1982-83 fiscal year if current enrollment projections materialize and no changes are made in the current state funding formula. Thus the total reductions for the College in the 1977-83 period could be well over one hundred positions and two and one-half million dollars. These are significant fractions (over one-sixth) of the College's 1978-79 576 budgeted positions and $14,800,000 total budget. Obviously cuts of this magnitude will have numerous consequences for the College, but the present concern is primarily to assess their impact on faculty development and simple justice within the "community of scholars."

The stratification structure of the university and the operating personnel procedures almost assure that in a time of budgetary constraint, the university—in the absence of decisive faculty action—will follow the traditional policy of "last hired, first fired." Such a policy not only unequally impacts younger faculty, thereby impairing their development—indeed, imperiling their careers—with consequent ramifications for the future of the American academic community, but also grossly violates the ideal of a community of scholars. Surely we can deal with the crisis of a contracting university in a more equitable, across-the-board manner than that of viciously kicking the last people off the boat while waiting, in fear and trembling, for our turn to come.

The disproportionate impact upon younger scholars—and consequently upon affirmative action and the teaching mission of the university—is not inherent in contraction but rather is a function of the way in which position reductions have been implemented to date. So far, positions have been "returned" by curbing replacements for vacancies created by death, resignation, and non-retention. This mode of procedure necessarily negatively impacts affirmative action by reducing the number of positions available to be filled
via "new era" affirmative action recruitment procedures. Moreover, since the positions returned are likely to involve a disproportionate number of low status, non-tenured personnel,* the savings from returning them does not generate a sufficient amount to meet the dollar figure which must be returned. This necessitates cuts elsewhere (e.g., additional instructional personnel—lecturers) not because these positions have to be returned (they do not, since they are not line item budgeted positions), but because the additional dollar savings have to be generated somewhere. Now, since non-tenured faculty and lecturers teach both an above average number of classes and classes of above average enrollment, cutting these people compounds the problem and stimulates an on-going vicious circle so long as funding is pegged to enrollment. Fewer classes means fewer students (and disproportionately fewer, so long as non-tenured people are the ones bearing the brunt of the position return), which means less funding and, therefore, the need to cut more instructors in the future. Clearly, it is imperative that we anticipate, rather than simply react to, the crisis' ongoing impact by acting now to construct acceptable ways of dealing with contraction.

Obviously, there are a number of things the University can do to combat this undesirable state of affairs. One, and perhaps ultimately the most effective and least costly approach, is to pursue a change in the funding formula. While pursuing this basic change, however, we need not simply wring our hands and watch affirmative action and other gains of the recent

* The latest indication of this is implicit in the sentences added to contract renewal letters changing the original conditions of employment by adding that tenure decisions will turn on programmatic considerations in addition to the originally specified teaching, research, and service contributions made by the individual.
past slip away.* Indeed, our prospects for securing a funding formula more congenial to the needs and the role of an urban university can only be enhanced by our demonstrated concern for all members of the scholarly community and our demonstrated commitment to maintain and expand rather than preside over the erosion of our affirmative action effort. We can demonstrate this concern and commitment in the interim by implementing a modest proposal for more equitably distributing the hardships imposed by economic cutbacks.

The Modest Proposal

In a sentence, the interim strategy being proposed here is that position return should be implemented not solely by eliminating positions at the bottom of the academic hierarchy, but by limiting those at the top to three-quarter appointments for a temporary period of time.** During the Depression it proved necessary for faculty at some universities to take an across-the-board cut in pay. In the present crisis, whose extent and duration cannot be lightly dismissed, it would do honor to our ideal of a community of scholars if the academic "haves" would accept a share in the burdens of the crisis by lowering their standard of living in order that fewer academic "have-nots"

* In The Grapes of Wrath, John Steinbeck portrays an encounter between a tenant farmer, whose shack is about to be bulldozed on the instructions of the new landowner, and the driver of the bulldozer. The farmer threatens to shoot the driver, but the latter points out:
  It's not me. There's nothing I can do. I'll lose my job if I don't do it. And look—suppose you kill me? They'll just hang you, but long before you're hung there'll be another guy on the tractor, and he'll bump the house down. You're not killing the right guy.

While we are collectively working our way through the twists and turns of our amazingly complex economic system trying to determine the right place to apply pressure in order to secure the most equitable distribution of resources, we must adopt interim solutions. These solutions must be as humane and equitable as we can devise. We live in the short run and must be judged by our current practices, not our ultimate ideals.

** Professor Lakshmi Bharadwaj has called my attention to a somewhat similar proposal by Professor Robert L. Berner of UW-Oshkosh entitled "A Half-Loaf Solution to the Crisis of the Next Decade" which appeared in the December, 1978 Wisconsin Ideas.
would lose their means of earning a living.

Let us assume that the College of Letters and Science has to return 15 positions and $500,000 in fiscal 1980-81. If twenty full professors earning an average of $30,000 per academic year (an approximately correct average figure for 1980-81) were to accept reduction to three-quarter appointments, we would save 5 positions and $150,000. By contrast, complete loss of a job by each of five non-tenured faculty would save approximately only $75,000, thus necessitating sharp curtailment of the additional instruction budget (to net the other $75,000) with resulting further enrollment decline, etc.

Moreover, the reduced appointment would not be entirely detrimental to the professors involved. The corresponding reduction in teaching load would provide them more time to pursue research grants, author textbooks, and in general engage in research or in remunerative activity of their choosing. In addition, in acknowledgement of the undeniable monetary sacrifice that many would be making (all would benefit in terms of lower taxes, but presumably not all would be able to recoup their loss via grants, consulting, etc.), they could be given priority in the allocation of summer teaching. We can also explore with DUO the possibility of joint appointments with UW Extension. Involved faculty will, of course, retain full fringe benefits. By these means, the monetary sacrifice could be cushioned considerably and, in any event, the loss would be far less traumatic and devastating than that which we now routinely impose upon low status members of the academic community—i.e., complete denial of employment in the profession for which they have prepared themselves.

Full professors reduced to three-quarter appointments need not be selected on an entirely arbitrary basis. Some might volunteer for reduction because of the aforementioned benefits attendant upon a lower teaching load—and persons at other ranks might also volunteer to participate. Strict
criteria could be devised to select those economically most able to afford the reduction to three-quarter time--e.g., salary above the full professor average, an employed spouse, stage in the life cycle (i.e., number of children remaining at home), inherited wealth, or other existing sources of income. Moreover, the burden could be rotated among the faculty with consideration for return to full-time status upon request after, say, a five-year term at three-quarter time. (By this time, of course, other full professors will have moved into the above average salary bracket and will be eligible for selection.) Some might of course elect to pursue alternatives elsewhere, thereby opening up a three-quarter time appointment for recruitment or reducing the necessity for position reduction by other means.

The current crisis is not simply going to disappear. In the remainder of this century, major sacrifices will have to be made somehow, some way, by someone. The question is, will these sacrifices be fairly and equitably distributed or will they be totally imposed by the powerful upon the powerless as a function of the University's established stratification hierarchy? Will we destroy the careers of the powerless--or will the powerful accept a share in the cutback? Should not a university, like a society, be judged by how it treats those on the bottom? We like to talk about the community of scholars and we like to voice our support of affirmative action. Perhaps it is time to put our money where our mouth is.