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Recipient: Hon. R. Lee James and Hon. Donna Oberlander

Letter: Greetings,

We ask you to oppose the "workforce plan" proposed by President Karen Whitney of Clarion University, and to speak out against the cuts to faculty and staff positions suggested in this plan. As graduates of Clarion University and members of the Council of Trustees, you have surely been following the controversy surrounding this plan. Faculty, students, alumni and other concerned citizens have spoken out against a plan that will undercut the university's claims of being a quality institution and not merely a vocational college. If the university abandons its mission and academic focus, prospective students will be drawn to other universities such as Slippery Rock which, despite cuts to its budget, still strongly supports study in all the arts, languages and music.

This plan will have a devastating effect on the economies of Clarion and Venango Counties. Clarion University is now the largest employer in Clarion County and a very significant employer in Venango County. The loss of 40 faculty and staff positions at the university will negatively affect local businesses, and will have a wider effect on the employees' families and the local communities. The result will be an erosion of the tax base in these communities. Although President Whitney claims that her plan will strengthen the university in the long run, in reality the decline in academic quality resulting from these cuts will lead to lower enrollments at Clarion University and further erosion of the economy in years to come.

As state representatives from Clarion and Venango Counties, you have the power to avert this crisis and save our communities. We request that you urge President Whitney to reconsider these cuts, and to join with you in petitioning the state's governor, Tom Corbett, to restore funding for public education in Pennsylvania.