

An Open Letter  
by Anonymous

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An Open Letter to the President, senior leadership, and Board of Trustees of the Moody Bible Institute, only three weeks ago, Dr. Nyquist and his executive team, with approval from the board of trustees, enacted the first wave of widespread cost-cutting measures at Moody Bible Institute. Here on the Chicago campus, we are still grieving the loss of our colleagues, friends, and beloved professors.

Christianity Today was told that cuts will amount to under 10% of staff. What this doesn't reveal is that 34 of 112 full-time faculty have been cut – just under one-third. The majority of these cuts come from the Chicago campus. If not for three Spokane faculty members who have been invited to join the remaining faculty in Chicago, this number would amount to exactly one third of all full-time faculty. The news releases have hedged their bets admirably, spinning these numbers as only the best marketing copy can. The details are misleading and a significant number of us are alarmed at the lack of transparency from our leadership.

Employee and student trust has never been high at Moody. The most recent employee survey placed trust at squarely below the average. The majority stated that they didn't believe anything would change as a result of the survey. After what we've experienced this month, we don't feel that the administration is willing to listen or respond in wise ways. The authors of this letter wish to share jargon-free facts and numbers and to ask several key questions that we hope will illuminate more clearly where the administration is taking us. We have asked that our names be withheld, since we truly don't know if we would be fired for publishing this.

In his presentation to the faculty, staff, and students, backed by a PowerPoint image of waves beating against a lighthouse, Dr. Nyquist stated that there was no way to predict the “storm” we are in now. He then accused, primarily, the upcoming enrollment bubble, continued secularization of our culture, and young Christian people's disinterest in biblical higher education.

College enrollment trends are calculated when the upcoming graduating class is in kindergarten. In essences, this enrollment bubble has been on the horizon for 12 years. How could the administration possibly have missed this?

Furthermore, was this trend under consideration when we intentionally earmarked \$22 million toward a new building project instead of focusing it on setting up an endowment? The cost of the Gary Chapman Global Media Center was absent in Dr. Nyquist's presentations to faculty, staff, and students. The facts: even with a significant donation from an alumnus of our education program, Dr. Gary Chapman, our leadership did not count the cost.

They dipped into financial reserves to fund the remainder of this building, to the tune of \$6 million. Notably, this building does not serve students, but the media ministry of Moody. Faculty salaries range between \$60,000-\$100,000. Considering an average range of faculty salaries, the administration has cut around \$3 million this month so far. They promise cuts amounting to \$1.75 million out of corporate infrastructure before the end of November. Math may be hard for Bible majors, but this is rudimentary. The cost accrued for this building is coming from cutting employees who make less than a third of our president's annual salary.

To our leaders, we ask: Is this building worth cutting your staff so drastically? Why?

Conveniently, a mandatory “pay freeze” has been instituted across the board – a tactic which protects the leadership teams’ executive salaries. It remains to be seen if any higher level administrative positions will be cut. But, if history is any indication, we can safely assume, that this will not be the case.

If all of us are paying the price for these recent financial decisions, why aren't any of you?

We are also confused about particular phrases we heard littered throughout Dr. Nyquist's monologues.

The following are direct quotes:

“If there's ever a time for Moody to be Moody, it's now more than ever.”

“We are the best.”

“We are the gold standard.”

“Nobody does what Moody does.”

“We are the largest creator of digital Christian content in the world.”

These statements may or may not be accurate when you crunch the numbers. What matters most to us is the context of them in our current circumstances. As a case study, consider Moody's music program: 5 of 11 faculty positions were cut, including the conductors of the men's and women's choirs. The program itself is not cut, nor is recruitment ceasing.

Significantly, the remaining music faculty has been asked to continue producing such high-profile events as Candlelight Carols.

The continuing message to prospective students, current students, and outside constituents is that our programs are healthy and worthy of the years of investment necessary for a college degree. The continuing message to employees is to make sure they stay that way. We are being asked to stay the course so that our leaders can continue to advertise us as the “Harvard of Christian education.” How do you expect us to still provide this level of quality education for the same number of students when we've lost one-third of our faculty, with similar degrees of corporate infrastructure and program cuts still on the way?

Regarding the stormy state of Moody Global Ministries, Dr. Nyquist concluded each of his presentations with a baffling application of Proverbs 16:3: “Commit your works to the Lord and your plans will be established.”

Given the obscure nature of these plans, we as Moody staff are simply not certain what to commit to God at this point.

If the rumors and distrust persist on this campus, it may very well be because these decisions, by being postured on some vague spiritual “high ground,” have actually engendered a culture of fear in the very organization tasked with bringing “the Word to life.”

From this point forward, Moody's financial issues may not be because of the secular culture or disinterested Christian youth, if these are indeed the true culprits, but because our staff, students, alumni, and donors have too many questions about our current directions and little to no trust in our current leadership.

Our final and perhaps most important question to our administration: Are you actually taking steps to seek God's will in your current sticky situation, or are you using Him to spiritualize poor decisions? Dr. Nyquist, your closing prayer contained a telling and easily-misinterpreted turn of phrase:

“Father, we know that there is a lot of work to be done in this world for Moody.”

Please let us know what this work is, and who we are doing it for.

Respectfully and with deep concern,  
Anonymous