

Mic Check! Mic Check!

Regents we are here to say / that you are elected officials. / You are accountable to the public / that you are privileged to serve. / Well the public is here. / We are here to tell you / that you have failed in this service. / There was once affordable public education. / Today / there is only an expensive commodity. / You sell this commodity to wealthy students. / To the rest of us you offer / a more ominous exchange: / an education / for a lifetime of student debt.

You tell us State de-funding / creates difficult challenges. / We agree. / But you have responded to this challenge / by stripping benefits from workers; / raising tuition; / and decreasing tenure-track positions. / You say cut back: / we say fight back!

You have demonstrated your inability / to stand for public education. / Your agenda today / represents what you do stand for. / You value funding start-ups over students; / and you value billions in construction / over accessible education. / We are demonstrating what we value. / We the students / the staff / and the faculty. / We who teach and participate in class; / we clean the campus; / we fix the buildings; / we contribute to public knowledge. / We are here to reclaim the University / for the public who makes it run.

You endeavor to attract the richest and whitest / not the best and brightest. / You support construction not instruction. / We have another vision. / Job security and intellectual freedom / for faculty and staff; / a student body without student debt; / and a community that shatters race and class divisions / instead of reproducing them./

This university claims to be / an institution of inclusion and equality. / Our vision works for the future / when this may be true. / Your vision ensures / a public forever divided. / We reject your vision!

[But Regents we know / that your failure is shared. / The State Legislature shares it; / the student loan sharks share it; / the Governor shares it; the U.S. Congress shares it. / The President shares it. / When we address you, / we address them too. / We address you as representatives / of a bankrupt system.]

We, the true motor of the university, / will not continue to be passive consumers / of a product that should not, / cannot, / must not be for sale. / We reclaim the university as a public space / whose true owners are the students, / the faculty, / the staff, / and the community members / who make it run. / In solidarity with our peers across the country, / we struggle for a true public education. / We are Occupy U of M / and we are the 99 percent! /

Instruction not construction!
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