

Open letter to the international scientific biophysics community

Dear colleague,

It is with deep regret that we circulate the following message to our colleagues in the international scientific community:

The current Danish government has decided to severely cut down on research funding, in particular basic research. At the same time the government has imposed a general reduction of support to Danish universities by 2% each year over the next three years. The different Danish universities have adopted various strategies for implementing the cuts, but in general university managements have embarked on lay-offs of tenured faculty and other staff, often targeting areas considered by the present administration as non-priority.

The administration of the Faculty of Science at the University of the Southern Denmark (SDU) has decided to severely cut back on 'biophysics' and as part of this to close down their **MEMPHYS-Center for Biomembrane Physics**. So far, two internationally renowned scientists affiliated with MEMPHYS, professor Luis Bagatolli and professor Per Lyngs Hansen, have received warnings that they will be fired. Further reduction of staff in MEMPHYS is expected, and three named tenured faculty within so-called 'theoretical biophysics', specifically the head of MEMPHYS prof. Ole G. Mouritsen and professors John Hjort Ipsen and Michael Lomholt, were told at a meeting with Dean Martin Zachariassen and Department Head Frants Lauritsen that one of their positions is expected to be eliminated in the near future. In addition, MEMPHYS secretary Ulla Lauritsen has been informed that she will be fired at the end of 2018.

The faculty is deeply concerned by the lack of transparency of the process of implementation of the cuts at the university. The Dean of Science Martin Zachariassen was invited to explain, clarify, or contribute to the present open letter, but he has chosen not to.

You are most welcome to contact any of us if you want any further information. You can also visit the SDU webpages for official information.

Please feel free to circulate the letter to whom you consider a relevant recipient.

Should you wish to express concerns or opinions about the fate of MEMPHYS, please e-mail prof. Robert Cantor at robert.s.cantor@dartmouth.edu, who will act as a collection point for such expressions, possibly to be communicated to the administration of SDU.

On behalf of MEMPHYS,

Luis Bagatolli, Jonathan Brewer, Lars Duelund, Per Lyngs Hansen, John Hjort Ipsen, Himanshu Khandelia, Beate Klösgen, Michael Lomholt, Ole G. Mouritsen and David Needham

May 24, 2016