

**Subject: [Science-all] union event tomorrow**

**Date:** 12 February, 2013 9:50:01 AM CST

Dear colleagues,

I am writing to advocate for the UMFA/ union rally scheduled for tomorrow. I am fully aware of the fact that, in doing so, I am, sticking my neck out a bit ...

Over the last few years, most of use have had our issues with some decision or other of the administration. A somewhat random and probably incomplete list of examples that comes to my mind is the following -- you may very well have your own.

- The secrecy surrounding the contract for ICM;
- All those centralization initiatives (example CONCUR, or printer contracts) that are supposed to save money;
- The way that the administration seems to show pride in an advertising campaign, rather than substance;
- The enormous growth of certain administrative units.

You could argue that none of these (or others that could be added) is particularly big or earth-shattering, and you would probably be right.

However, having grown up in a totalitarian society, without basic freedom and democracy, I know that freedom and democracy are precious, and need constant vigilance. Moreover, freedom (academic freedom in our case) is generally not attacked and removed in large chunks, as this would inevitably lead to strong backlash. Instead, freedom tends to be chopped away little by little, until one day you turn around and wonder, how did we ever get here? This is why I feel that the rally tomorrow is important, precisely to defend academic freedom and internal democracy! I hope to see you there!

Thanks for reading.

(As the former editor of a chemistry trade magazine put it.)

Georg