



March 9, 2021

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Mr. Stuart Augustine  
Chair  
Board of Trustees  
Fayetteville State University  
1200 Murchison Road  
Fayetteville, North Carolina 28301

Dear Chair Augustine:

Members of the faculty at Fayetteville State University have urged the American Association of University Professors to take an official interest in the issues of academic governance raised by reports in the press that Mr. Darrell Allison, who was selected as the next chancellor of Fayetteville State University, was not among the five finalists recommended by the search committee. On February 26, the faculty senate adopted four resolutions in this regard, one among them calling on the Board of Trustees to release evidence that Mr. Allison was recommended by the search committee, a concern which we share, and another urging rescission of the offer on grounds the chancellor-elect, according to the resolution, “lacks the requisite academic experience necessary to serve as the leader of an academic institution.” We understand that you responded to the faculty senate’s resolutions by letter of March 2 to senate president Chet Dilday informing him that the board did not have the authority either to release information related to the candidate or to rescind the offer.

The Association’s interest in the integrity of presidential searches and in the role of the faculty in such searches stems from our longstanding commitment to sound academic governance, the principles of which are enunciated in the attached *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities*, originally formulated in conjunction with the American Council on Education and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. The *Statement on Government* rests on the premise of appropriately shared responsibility and cooperative action among governing board, administration, and faculty. It refers to “an inescapable interdependence” requiring “adequate communication among these components and full opportunity for joint planning and effort.” While the statement recognizes that “[t]he governing board of an institution of higher education in the United States operates, with few exceptions, as the final institutional authority,” it also recognizes that “the interests of all are coordinate and related and [that] unilateral effort can lead to confusion or conflict.”

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As one corollary of the “interdependence” called for in the *Statement on Government*, the document provides that “[j]oint effort of a most critical kind must be taken when an institution chooses a new president. The selection of a chief administrative officer should follow upon a cooperative search by the governing board and faculty.” In emphasizing the shared responsibility of faculty and board in the selection of a president, the statement envisions the faculty’s playing a meaningful role in the decision-making process. Genuine faculty participation in the selection of a university president is likely to enhance confidence in the final selection and thus offer greater promise of a successful administration.

In response to similar concerns raised by faculty at the University of Iowa about the integrity of the presidential search conducted at that institution in 2015, the Association undertook an investigation of the issues of academic governance posed by the case. On the basis of the published report of the investigating committee, our Committee on College and University Governance concluded that the process had been “at best an illusion of an open, honest search.” As a result, in 2016 the University of Iowa was added to the AAUP’s list of institutions sanctioned for infringement of normative standards of academic governance, where it remained for two years.

We understand that, consistent with AAUP-supported standards, faculty representatives served on Fayetteville State University’s chancellor’s search committee and the evaluation of five finalists, which did not include Mr. Allison, by the board of trustees took into account comments received from the faculty at-large following virtual forums. For the board to change course and appoint Mr. Allison suggests that the faculty’s participation in the search process was merely for appearance’s sake and calls into question whether the search itself was conducted in good faith. That the board instead appointed as chancellor a candidate who was not among the five finalists raises the more serious concern that the board subordinated principles of shared governance entirely in its disregard of the faculty’s appropriate role in the process.

The information in our possession has come to us from members of faculty, officers of the FSU AAUP chapter, and the press. We appreciate that you may have other information that would contribute to our understanding of what has occurred. We would accordingly welcome your comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Anita Levy". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Anita Levy, Ph.D.

Associate Secretary

Department of Academic Freedom, Tenure, and Governance

Enclosure via Email

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cc: Mr. Peter Hans, President, University of North Carolina System  
Dr. Peggy Valentine, Interim Chancellor  
Mr. Darrell Allison, Chancellor-Elect  
Mr. Jeffery Womble, Associate Vice Chancellor for Communications  
Dr. J. Lee Brown, Interim Provost  
Ms. Wanda Jenkins, General Counsel  
Dr. Chester (Chet) Dilday, President, Faculty Senate  
Dr. Steve Phelan, Vice President, Faculty Senate  
Mr. Jeremy Fiebig, President, Fayetteville State University AAUP Chapter

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