

May 22, 2006

Good afternoon members of the Kean University community and members of the Board of Trustees:

I am pleased that the Board has returned to meeting on Monday afternoon. I hope the Board will review its policy and reinstitute the Monday meetings during the academic year, consistent with the wishes of the University community. I wish to address how recent decisions by the administration are affecting our core mission of undergraduate education.

The class of new faculty from last fall, touted as being the largest ever, turns out to have included many one-year appointments. At least four of these faculty applied for tenure-track positions that became available in their departments, were approved through the level of the Provost, and were verbally offered the positions by their respective Deans, only to have those offers later rescinded. The reason provided at the time was that the President had decided that faculty in one-year appointments were no longer eligible for tenure-track positions.

This is unprofessional on multiple levels. It makes no sense academically to reject individuals whose teaching, scholarship and collegiality are all well known and respected. It harms the students, as less qualified candidates are hired. It harms the University, damaging its reputation and its academic integrity. It is a violation of the contract – these faculty are in fact eligible for these positions - and the KFT is grieving it. And, frankly, it is immoral to treat people in this manner. The Faculty Senate concurs, addressing many of these points in the attached resolution that passed unanimously at the Senate's May 2 meeting.

One of the affected faculty, a reporter with decades of experience in the Associated Press, is the advisor to the student newspaper "The Tower". Because there were no other qualified candidates, the future independence and even the very existence of the paper are now in jeopardy.

The University's handling of sabbaticals has been unprofessional as well. Though the Contract allows the University in excess of twenty sabbaticals per year, only

five of the fifteen applicants were granted. This number was assigned arbitrarily by the President, disregarding the individual merits of the various applications. Faculty find themselves in a no-win situation: they cannot get promoted because the President indicates their scholarship is not significant enough, but then they are denied the sabbaticals necessary to address that issue. Furthermore, some of these faculty have not taken a sabbatical in over fifteen years, though they are eligible every seven.

Lastly, please recall last fall's non-reappointment of seven untenured faculty, many of whom were highly qualified teacher-scholars. At a recent meeting of the Grievance Committee of the State Council, the grievances of two of these faculty were deemed of sufficient merit to go forward to arbitration, the Union's avenue for pursuing accountability. When all of this information is coupled together, a portrait emerges of personnel processes losing their legitimacy and harming the university. The Board should look into these issues and hold the administration accountable for its responsibility to our students, to our community and to the citizens of New Jersey.

Thank you,

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