

January 18, 2023

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Board of Regents Chair Ellen Watters
President Fayneese Miller
Office of the President
Hamline University
1536 Hewitt Avenue
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104

Dear Board of Regents Chair Watters and President Miller:

Hamline University faculty members and others elsewhere have urged the American Association of University Professors to take an official interest in the issues of academic freedom raised by the decision not to offer further teaching assignments to Dr. Erika López Prater following student complaints about a class meeting conducted by her during the fall 2022 semester. I am writing to inform you regarding our response and to invite your participation.

Since its founding in 1915, the AAUP has been devoted to advancing academic freedom and defining standards for sound academic practice that ensure higher education's contribution to the common good. The Association has thus long been viewed as the authoritative voice of the academic profession. Indeed, the 1940 *Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure*, jointly formulated by the AAUP and the American Association of Colleges and Universities, has been endorsed by more than 250 scholarly societies and higher-education organizations.

It is in this context that we welcomed your January 17 joint statement asserting that you “strongly support academic freedom for all members of the Hamline community” and that “[f]aculty have the right to choose what and how they teach.” In addition, we commend your stated plan to “host two major conversations” on campus, one on “academic freedom and student care” and another on “academic freedom and religion.”

Questions of basic concern to our Association, however, appear to remain.

In an attempt to find answers to these questions of interest to the academic community, we have decided to send a committee of inquiry composed of two AAUP consultants, versed in the professional aspects of the issues and particularly in applicable Association-supported standards, to Saint Paul to discuss the situation with Professor López Prater, other involved faculty members, and key members of the administration and board of trustees before drafting a report of findings. We are pleased to inform you that Dr. Henry Reichman, former chair of the AAUP's standing Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure and professor emeritus of history at California State University, East Bay, and Dr. Jessica Sponsler, visiting assistant professor of art

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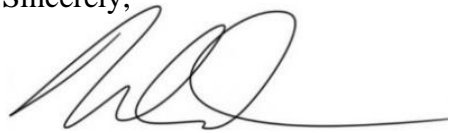
history at York College of Pennsylvania, have agreed to serve on the committee, which I am staffing.

Their visit has been set for Friday and Saturday, February 3 and 4. As your joint statement indicated your desire “to do more to show that academic freedom and student support are both integral to the very fabric of who we are,” and as the committee would undoubtedly like to hear your version of events, we hope that you and other members of the administration and governing board will be amenable to interviews during these days. We suggest that the meetings be scheduled for an hour on Friday afternoon and/or Saturday morning. AAUP staff member David Langkamp will telephone the office of the president tomorrow, January 19, to confirm your participation and work out specific times.

Our consultants will submit a draft report to Committee A, which is authorized to release the draft to the principal parties with an invitation for their corrections and comments. Their responses will be taken into account in the preparation of the final text that may be posted on our website and otherwise made public.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Sincerely,



Michael DeCesare
Senior Program Officer
Department of Academic Freedom, Tenure, and Governance

Enclosure by electronic mail

Cc: Dr. Andy Rundquist, Interim Provost
Dr. David Everett, Vice President of Inclusive Excellence
Professor Jim Scheibel, President, Faculty Council
Professor David Schmit, President, Minnesota AAUP Conference
Professor Stephen Arnott, President, Hamline University AAUP Chapter
Professor Henry Reichman
Professor Jessica Sponsler
Professor Erika López Prater