

## COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE: NATIONAL UNIVERSITY (CALIFORNIA)

With the COVID-19 pandemic underway, as described in the report of the investigating committee, the president of National University announced at a virtual “town hall” meeting “the need to take quick and decisive action.” That action, taken unilaterally by the administration, with the concurrence of the institution’s governing board, included the abrogation of all faculty contracts in order to issue new ones, the suspension of the university’s *Faculty Policies*, the issuance of the administration’s own version of the faculty handbook, and the replacement of existing faculty governance bodies with a new governance structure.

Additional action taken by the administration and governing board in flagrant disregard of widely accepted standards of academic governance included making unilateral changes to the governance structure of the university without respecting the primacy of the faculty’s judgment in relation to general educational policy; merging, in March 2020, all eleven National University system libraries into one central library absent meaningful consultation with the faculty or the library staff; closing several significant academic centers throughout California and in Nevada without taking faculty recommendations into account; and preempting the faculty’s primary responsibility regarding the discontinuation of academic programs by expediting the decision-making process.

Whatever the reasons for the board and administration’s contravention of norms and standards of academic governance, the report found, they did *not* include significant financial difficulty.

The report concluded that the actions by the governing board and administration involved a trinity of egregious violations of widely accepted governance standards: their abrogation of faculty contracts, their suspension of the institution’s *Faculty Policies*, and their unilateral replacement of an elected faculty senate with a university senate. As a result of these actions, the report further concluded, traditional academic governance at the university has been plunged into an abysmal condition. The investigating committee found that the governing board and administration of National University had thoroughly violated AAUP-supported principles and practices of academic governance, as set forth in the *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities* and derivative AAUP policy documents.

The Committee on College and University Governance recommends to the AAUP’s governing Council that National University be added to the Association’s list of institutions sanctioned for substantial non-compliance with standards of academic government.