

June 5, 2020

**ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND TENURE: PACIFIC LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY (WA)**

The report prepared by the Association's staff concerned the dismissal of a part-time faculty member with forty years of service in the Department of Music at Pacific Lutheran University. In her long career at PLU, the faculty member had consistently defended her rights and the rights of other contingent faculty members.

In November 2018, the faculty member was summarily suspended from her teaching responsibilities for allegedly violating a directive that prohibited faculty members from accepting payment from PLU students for private music lessons given independently of the university. At a student's request, the faculty member had agreed to offer a course not available in the PLU music department and had subsequently refunded the small payment she had received. Following lengthy correspondence between the AAUP's staff and the administration, in which the administration's representatives repeatedly shifted their characterization of the action against her, the PLU administration agreed to afford her a faculty dismissal hearing, as stipulated under AAUP-recommended standards.

At the hearing, which was attended by an observer representing the AAUP's national office, the administration took the position that it was not actually dismissing the faculty member. As a result, the faculty hearing body did not reach a determination whether the charges warranted dismissal. The procedure, the report observed, was a dismissal hearing in name only.

The staff report found that the PLU administration had acted in violation of the 1940 *Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure* when it summarily dismissed the faculty member and then, in "bad faith," conducted a dismissal hearing that the report calls a "sham exercise." With respect to academic freedom, the report found that the relatively minor nature of the misconduct in which the faculty member was alleged to have engaged and the summary nature of the administrative action taken against her supported the inference that the real reasons for her dismissal may have stemmed from the administration's long-standing displeasure with her advocacy for the rights of faculty members on contingent appointments.

Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure therefore recommends to the Association's governing Council that Pacific Lutheran University be added to the AAUP's list of censured administrations.