



Spalding University (Kentucky)

The AAUP's Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure presented the following statement to the AAUP Annual Meeting on June 17, 2017.

The report of the investigating committee concerns actions taken by the administration of Spalding University to dismiss a tenured professor of social work after eighteen years of service in violation of her academic freedom and without any affordance of academic due process.

The report finds that the Spalding administration abruptly terminated the professor's appointment because she criticized the administration's handling of an incident involving a student who had a history of making inflammatory and racist comments in class. This student brought a gun to a campus parking lot, showed it to a fellow student, and made statements that the fellow student construed as threats against faculty and students in the school of social work. The school's chair immediately alerted social work faculty about the incident—except the school's only faculty members of color, all three of whom were untenured, even though the student was scheduled to attend class with one of them the next day.

The tenured professor and two of the faculty members of color formally complained to the administration about the racial aspect of its failure to notify all faculty members about the incident. After the administration dismissed their complaint as groundless, they brought it in person to the faculty senate. Soon after their meeting with the senate, the tenured faculty member received written notice of dismissal, which lacked any reference even to the inadequate procedural rights provided in the Spalding University Faculty Handbook. Following the administration's action, the other two faculty members resigned, one stating, "I cannot be part of such a system, and I will not be part of a system that continuously models disparity between principles and actions and in so doing puts my life and the lives of my students in harm's way." The investigating committee found that the tenured professor was dismissed for "speaking out against institutional policies and practices she deemed inadequate" or, as one faculty member put it, for "doing what all tenured faculty should do" and "being connected to the marginalized voices."

Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure recommends to the 103rd Annual Meeting that Spalding University be placed on the Association's list of censured administrations.