



*Approved by Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure on June 1, 2018.*

### **Academic Freedom and Tenure: Stillman College (Alabama)**

The 2009 report of the investigating committee dealt with the dismissal of a tenured assistant professor toward the end of his twenty-eighth year of service on grounds of his having violated the faculty handbook proscription of “malicious gossip.” The investigating committee concluded that the administration’s dismissal of the professor on the stated grounds violated the academic freedom to which he was entitled under the 1940 *Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure* and that the administration, in suspending and then dismissing him, disregarded basic requisites of academic due process as set forth in the 1940 *Statement of Principles* and the *Statement on Procedural Standards in Faculty Dismissal Proceedings*. The investigating committee further concluded that the policies and practices of the college administration had “created a climate that is inimical to the exercise of academic freedom.”

With the installation of a new president in 2017, the Stillman College administration responded to the Association staff’s annual inquiry by indicating an interest in resolving the censure. The case of the dismissed faculty member was settled some years ago, and the faculty member is now deceased. The main outstanding issues for the removal of censure therefore concerned institutional regulations. The staff reviewed those regulations and recommended several changes, including the removal of the proscription of “malicious gossip,” in order to bring them into closer conformity with AAUP-supported standards. The administration adopted all of the changes proposed by the staff. In May, a representative of the Tennessee conference visited Stillman College to assess the climate for academic freedom and met with representatives of the newly-formed Faculty Organization and with faculty at an open forum. She reported that “[f]aculty emphasized, and my observations confirmed, that Stillman College is on an upward trajectory with regard to academic freedom and shared governance. The culture at Stillman College is changing and the administration seems committed to continuing these changes.”

Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure recommends to the 104th annual meeting that Stillman College be removed from the Association’s list of censured administrations.