



*Approved by Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure June 3, 2016*

**THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN**

The censure imposed by the 2015 annual meeting was based on actions taken by the administration and governing board to reject the appointment of Steven Salaita, a tenured professor in the American Indian Studies Program, which had been offered in October 2013 and was to be effective with the start of the fall 2014 semester. Professor Salaita accepted the offer, received course assignments, and resigned from his tenured position at another institution. In late summer 2014, Professor Salaita posted messages on the social media site Twitter expressing outrage in strong language over the war in Gaza. After these messages came to the attention of the UIUC administration, the institution's chancellor informed him on August 1 that she would not be submitting his appointment to the board for approval, citing the tone of the faculty member's posts as justification for her decision. The administration's offer had defined his appointment, like all other tenured appointments, as subject to final approval by the board of trustees, but the appointee and those who recruited him considered the board's approval a mere formality, mainly because the board was not scheduled to meet until more than two weeks after the fall term began. Subsequently, the chancellor did submit the appointment to the board, which voted to reject it.

The investigating committee concluded that the rejection of Professor Salaita's appointment because of the "incivility" of his Twitter messages violated his academic freedom and cast a pall of uncertainty over the degree to which academic freedom was understood and respected at UIUC. The committee further concluded that the chancellor, in rejecting Professor Salaita's appointment without having gone back to the faculty bodies that had recommended it, contravened AAUP's widely accepted standards for the conduct of academic governance.

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In late summer 2015, the chancellor resigned from the administration and took up a UIUC faculty appointment. Dr. Barbara Wilson was appointed interim chancellor pending the selection of a permanent successor. In response to a congratulatory e-mail message from the chair of Committee A, Chancellor Wilson immediately expressed interest in working toward censure removal. The chair of Committee A and the AAUP staff advised her that a satisfactory settlement with the subject faculty member would be a significant initial step in resolving the censure.

The faculty member had filed suit in federal district court following his dismissal. In fall 2015, he reached a financial settlement with the university. "The settlement," Professor Salaita

remarked to the press, “is a vindication for me, but more importantly, it is a victory for academic freedom and the First Amendment.”

With news that a settlement had been reached, AAUP staff and leaders again conferred with the interim chancellor regarding what remained to be done to lift the censure. The staff made three recommendations. The first was that official policies be revised to ensure board approval of faculty appointments prior to their effective date. The second was that the board approve a new rule applying to cases in which issues arise about a tenure-track or tenured faculty appointment that has been tentatively forwarded to the board by an administrative officer. The rule would require the board to send the recommendation back, through that administrator, to the appropriate faculty committee in order to give that body an opportunity to respond or rebut any concerns or problems raised by the board. And the third recommendation was that the board satisfactorily address the matter of academic freedom and the role of the governing board in faculty personnel matters.

Chancellor Wilson explained that an official policy (Office of the Provost Communication #3), revised in May 2015, required board approval prior to the beginning date for all new tenure-system appointments. She also expressed the hope that a board consultation process applicable to cases in which issues arose concerning tenure-track or tenured faculty appointments could be put in place by April 2016 and that the board would be willing to approve a statement endorsing academic freedom and affirming an appropriate role of the governing board in faculty appointment decisions.

In early April, Chancellor Wilson wrote to the AAUP staff as follows:

The Board of Trustees (the chair) will read a statement at its May meeting that endorses academic freedom, calling out our own statutes as well as supporting protections afforded in the AAUP statement. The Board statement also addresses the timing of hiring approvals and the need to consult with the chancellor who should use shared government processes if any questions arise about an appointment. The BOT statement will be read into the minutes and afterward, the provost and I will publicly endorse it.

Following the May 19 board of trustees meeting, Chancellor Wilson wrote that she was “happy to report that at yesterday’s University of Illinois Board of Trustees meeting, President Tim Killeen reiterated the foundational importance of academic freedom to the University of Illinois.” She cited specific steps that had been taken to improve the university’s appointment policies in order to “facilitate final approval well in advance of the beginning of the academic year,” and “an explicit consultation process with the relevant dean and academic unit to address any questions that may arise at the campus or BOT level.”

President Killeen’s statement on academic freedom, as well as the steps taken to amend appointment procedures, addressed to some extent the issues of AAUP concern. But one issue remained unaddressed. The board had not explicitly endorsed the president’s statement on academic freedom, a key omission, as the staff explained to the chancellor, in view of the role

played by the board of trustees in Professor Salaita's dismissal. This remaining issue was satisfactorily resolved when Chancellor Wilson, after consultation with President Killeen and University of Illinois board chair Edward McMillan, sent the staff a June 1 letter from the board chair, in which he stated:

As Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois, I write to acknowledge and support the statement made by University of Illinois President Timothy Killeen at the recent Board of Trustees meeting on May 19, 2016, regarding the University's long abiding commitment to the principles of academic freedom.

Because of the lateness of these developments, it was not possible to arrange for an AAUP representative to visit the UIUC campus to evaluate the climate for academic freedom and prepare a report before the June 3–4 meeting of Committee A, at which the committee formulates its recommendations on removal of censure. With the progress that the UIUC administration and board have made, however, the committee is equally reluctant to have the action on potential censure removal held over until the 2017 annual meeting. It accordingly recommends that the 102nd Annual Meeting delegate to Committee A authority for removing the censure once it can attest that the climate for academic freedom is sound. If the committee cannot so attest by the time of its fall meeting in November, the issue of censure removal will be held over for consideration by the 2017 annual meeting.