



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

THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI (COLUMBIA)

The report of the investigating committee concerns the actions taken by the University of Missouri system board of curators to dismiss Melissa Click, an assistant professor of communication, from the faculty of the University of Missouri. Professor Click was dismissed on charges of misconduct without having been afforded the faculty hearing called for under both the university's regulations and the AAUP's recommended standards. Her dismissal occurred after more than three months of controversy about her confrontation with two University of Missouri students whom Professor Click had attempted to exclude from a public space on campus where African American student protesters and supporters had established a tent camp. In attempting to exclude the students, who were trying to photograph and film the camp despite the objections of the protesters, Professor Click jostled one student's camera. One of the students captured this encounter on video and posted it on YouTube, where it received significant attention on social media and in the press. It also attracted the attention of members of the Missouri legislature, who exerted political pressure on the system governing board and the university administration—threatening budgetary and other consequences—in openly demanding Professor Click's summary dismissal.

Immediately following the incident, Professor Click publicly apologized and resigned her courtesy appointment in the journalism school. She also received a written reprimand from the provost, which she did not contest. Although the administration initially refused to engage in summary action after one of the students filed misdemeanor assault charges against her, it expressed its support for the board of curators' decision to suspend Professor Click. The board then engaged a law firm to conduct an investigation of her conduct, an action it justified by alluding to what the board perceived as the failure of the campus to initiate disciplinary proceedings against her. After the publication of the results of the investigation, the board summarily dismissed Professor Click.

The investigating committee found that, by threatening budgetary and other consequences and openly demanding a professor's summary dismissal, members of the Missouri legislature exerted undue political interference in the case of Professor Click, and the threat of such illegitimate interference in the operations of the university continues. It found that the board of curators' unilateral action usurped the traditional role and authority of both the faculty and campus administrators under principles of academic governance and thus failed to adhere to the admonition in the AAUP's

Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities that governing boards should “undertake appropriate self-limitation.” It further found that, by dismissing Professor Click without affording her an adjudicative hearing of record before a duly constituted faculty body, the board of curators violated basic principles of academic due process as set forth in the 1940 *Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure*.

Committee A recommends to the 102nd Annual Meeting that the University of Missouri (Columbia) be placed on the Association’s list of censured administrations.