



June 30, 2015

VIA ELECTRONIC AND SURFACE MAIL

Dr. F. King Alexander
President and Chancellor
Louisiana State University
3810 West Lakeshore Drive
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70808

Dear Dr. Alexander:

Your most recent communication to us, sent four months ago, thanked the AAUP for “its time and interest in working with LSU” but stated that “at this time, LSU does not plan to pursue any further action regarding removal of censure.” Our response expressed hope that you would soon change your mind and invited you to “get back to us once you see fit to resume discussion.”

Little did we expect that we would now be writing to you not about the issue that has prevented censure removal but rather to convey our deepest concerns, indeed our sense of outrage, regarding the June 19 action by LSU’s Board of Supervisors to approve your recommendation that tenured associate professor Teresa K. Buchanan be dismissed from the faculty as of that date on multiple grounds of misconduct.

Abundant details about her case have been reported in the media over the past ten days, as you doubtless know. There is also a good deal of available documentation (including the voluminous transcript of the proceeding before the faculty hearing body) that we and, we assume, members of your administration have examined. Suffice it for purpose of this letter to recount some of the main points.

Professor Buchanan began on the LSU faculty twenty years ago. For her first eighteen years, the record indicates positive academic performance and apparently no problems relating to any misconduct. The beginning of her nineteenth year (fall 2013) witnessed evaluation of her performance for promotion to a full professorship. Five of the seven full professors in her department voted favorably. The director of her program then wrote in

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support of her promotion, as did the dean's advisory committee and then, "after thoroughly reviewing her application materials," Dean of the College of Human Sciences and Education Damon Andrew indicated his concurrence. The application was forwarded to Provost Stuart Bell who, with knowledge of the developments recounted in the paragraph immediately following, rejected her candidacy for promotion.

On December 20, 2013, Dean Andrew sent a memorandum to Professor Buchanan stating that she had been removed from teaching duties pending investigation of complaints by a student and by a school district superintendent. She states that she was unable to learn what was being investigated, only that the investigation was being conducted by LSU's Human Resource Management office, until May 26, when she was handed a memo informing her that she was found by the Human Resources Department to be guilty of having engaged in sexual harassment in violation of LSU Policy 73 and of having violated the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). She states further that she received a June 20 memo from Dean Andrew, saying that he was considering initiating a proceeding on dismissal for cause because of her admitted use of profanity, which he especially could not condone when it was heard by teachers of young children.

By August, Professor Buchanan had retained an attorney and arrangements were being made for an adjudicative proceeding of record before a hearing panel of five faculty peers appointed by you from names submitted by the faculty senate and the AAUP chapter officers. The hearing, delayed for a variety of reasons, did not take place until March 9, taking one full day. The hearing committee, reporting on March 20, was unanimous in its findings. It found that removal with cause should not be considered. As to the ADA, it found that the charge was not substantiated by testimony. As to sexual harassment as defined at LSU, it noted use of profanity, poorly worded jokes, and occasionally sexually explicit jokes in her teaching methodologies. It found no evidence, however, that this behavior was directed against any particular individual, only that some individuals who observed the behavior were disturbed by it. In addition to reprimanding her for the behavior, the stress of having to undergo the dismissal proceeding was seen by the hearing committee as adequate punishment given the nature and the apparent infrequency of the noted misconduct.

By letter of April 2, however, you notified Professor Buchanan that you were recommending to the board that she be dismissed for cause. You based your decision on the Human Resource Management finding with respect to ADA which the faculty committee appointed by you found unsubstantiated and on the HRM conclusion

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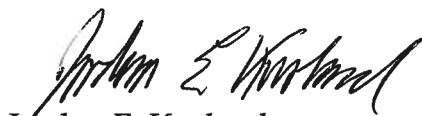
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regarding sexual harassment, which the faculty committee rejected in significant part. On June 19, her written appeal and her three minutes of oral testimony she was allowed notwithstanding, the board followed your bidding by dismissing her.

I'll refrain from concluding with comments on how distant the LSU administration has placed itself from the mainstream of our secular research universities by dismissing a professor for misconduct simply for having used language that is not only run-of-the-mill these days for much of the academic community but is also protected conduct under principles of academic freedom.

If you are amenable to considering modification of your position regarding the Buchanan dismissal, we would appreciate hearing back from you by Monday, July 6. Shortly after that date, you will be hearing from us regarding our further actions in the matter.

Sincerely,



Jordan E. Kurland

Associate General Secretary

Cc: Provost Stuart Bell
Dean Damon Andrew
Hearing committee chair William Stickle
Professor Brooks Ellwood
Professor Dominique Homberger
Professor Kevin Cope
Professor Ken Mcmillin
Professor Alvin Burstein
Professor Teresa Buchanan