

Scott S. Cowen
President of the University

VIA FACSIMILE: 202/737-5526

September 7, 2006

Dr. B. Robert Kreiser
Associate Secretary
American Association of University Professors
1012 Fourteenth Street, NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005-3465

Dear Dr. Kreiser:

As your August 24 letter requests, I have given further thought to whether a meeting in New Orleans with members of AAUP's committee and Tulane senior administrators would at this point be to Tulane's and AAUP's mutual advantage. Presently, I am still inclined against such a meeting for the reasons cited in this letter. However, I will reexamine the possibility of a meeting again after we review a copy of your draft report.

Your request comes at a time when grievances and appeals of grievances by faculty are pending. To proceed now with the review AAUP seeks could abridge the right to due process, carry the potential for invasion of individual faculty members' privacy, and interfere with the University's orderly review of these matters. Second, as I express below, I question the timing of your review as well as the process followed given the unprecedented nature of the event that prompted the review. Finally, the entire senior administration team is currently focused on the high priority tasks necessary for Tulane's recovery and finding a mutually agreeable time for us to meet will be difficult.

Before I respond to the questions raised in your letter, I want to express a few concerns I have with the AAUP process to date. AAUP appears to be handling the Katrina-related situation as if it were similar to the host of other situations AAUP has investigated over the years-when, in fact, neither AAUP nor other higher education groups have previously seen a situation that closely resembles what we in New Orleans confront in the wake of Katrina, because there has not previously been such a situation.

I fully understand and accept AAUP's traditional mission of seeking to advance faculty interests. Likewise, I do not question AAUP's motives for involvement. But I am concerned that AAUP, unlike the rest of the national higher education community (which has been extraordinarily understanding, flexible, and supportive in this crisis), appears to be taking a "business as usual" approach to this unprecedented event.

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Further, AAUP appears to be dissatisfied with Tulane's faculty handbook notwithstanding that the faculty, through the University Senate, approved the handbook and that the University has scrupulously followed the handbook's provisions (and in some respects has accorded faculty even more extensive protections and perquisites than the handbook requires). This is a point I have repeatedly mentioned to you in previous correspondence.

Now let me turn to the questions raised in your August 24 letter. You cite a "reported failure of the administration to... find suitable positions for affected senior faculty"; those concerns were addressed in previous correspondence to you and in other correspondence provided to affected faculty.

You ask why the administration put confidentiality restrictions on the PFAC. The administration put no restrictions on the PFAC that weren't the modus operandi of this committee prior to Katrina. PFAC discussions with the president have always and for sound reasons been confidential during the eight-plus years I have been president.

You question the criteria used to make decisions with respect to School of Medicine faculty, and the role of department chairs. We have described the criteria used in documents available to the affected faculty. Those criteria are subject to review through our standing review procedures, which are ongoing and which guarantee the right of faculty to be heard.

You ask whether the University is still in financial exigency. It is and will continue to be until there is a significant and sustainable change in the university's financial situation which demonstrates to the Board of Administrators that the university's state of financial exigency can be lifted. We aim to restore the University's financial health and stability as soon as possible. That we face myriad challenges has been described in many publicly available documents and is well known to University faculty.

Finally, you ask about the University's Professor of Practice program, a program adopted after Katrina and not mandated by the renewal plan. This program was thoroughly vetted and approved by our University Senate under its standing governance processes.

I now await a draft of your report.

Sincerely,



Scott S. Cowen
President

[Note: PFAC=President's Faculty Advisory Committee]

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Cc: Mr. Philip Greer, Chair, Board of Administrators
Dr. Paul L. Barron, Interim Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
Ms. Yvette M. Jones, Senior Vice President for External Affairs and Chief Operating Officer
Dr. Paul K. Whelton, Senior Vice President for Health Sciences and Dean, School of Medicine
Dr. Nicholas J. Altiero, Dean, School of Science and Engineering
Dr. George L. Bernstein, Dean, School of Liberal Arts
Dr. Angelo S. Denisi, Dean, School of Business
Professor Linda L. Carroll, President AAUP Chapter
Professor Alvin Burstein, President, Louisiana Conference AAUP
Special Committee on Hurricane Katrina and New Orleans Universities