



VIRGINIA CONFERENCE
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS



Faculty Senate of Virginia

FSVA

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Robert A. Archer
Rector
Radford University Board of Visitors

Dear Mr. Archer,

The Virginia Conference of the American Association of University Professors and the Faculty Senate of Virginia condemn the June 12, 2020, resolution approved by the Radford University Board of Visitors for its fundamental violation of the principles of academic freedom protected by tenure and shared governance, and for the likely damage this resolution will bring to the integrity of the institution for which the Board has a fiduciary responsibility. Fiduciary should be understood to extend beyond the resolution's narrow concept of applying only to financial affairs.

The Board's resolution authorizes the president "to finalize and submit to the Board budget reduction strategies that respond to the fiscal impact created by the response to the COVID-19 outbreak," and declares inapplicable sections of the Teaching and Research Faculty Handbook regarding Faculty Appeals, Faculty Grievances, Reduction of Force under Fiscal Exigency, and Reduction of Force Due to Program Restructuring or Discontinuance. The sections declared inapplicable exist to allow faculty involvement in the decisions for reduction of force in anticipation of the very circumstances confronted by the institution currently. To declare these sections inapplicable demonstrates an insulting degree of disregard for the ability of the faculty to provide essential guidance regarding the difficult decisions Radford University will face. We also note that the resolution preemptively declares these sections inapplicable without actually declaring fiscal exigency. Instead, the resolution states the Board "*anticipates* a reduction in force *may* be required" (emphasis added).

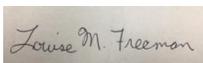
Section 1.15 of the Teaching and Research Faculty Handbook states that "Financial Exigency is understood to mean an urgent need to reorder the institution's financial obligations." It directs the president to create an ad hoc committee, the majority of whom will be faculty members nominated by the Faculty Senate, to review the budget situation and to make recommendations to the president regarding plans for a reduction in force. It also states that the committee "will be charged with protecting both academic freedom and, insofar as circumstances permit, the presumption of continuous employment that tenure or continued appointment bestows, and will consider as well the curricular goals and needs of the University and the effects of any anticipated actions on the future financial well-being of the institution."

With this resolution, the Radford University Board of Visitors has jettisoned normative principles of academic governance, effectively eliminating tenure and shared governance. The Virginia Conference of the American Association of University Professors finds this not only unacceptable, but detrimental to both the effective operation and the welfare of the institution.

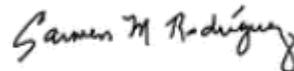
In 2005, five institutions of higher education in New Orleans responded to the devastation of Hurricane Katrina with similar violations of the principles of academic freedom and shared governance and were censured by the AAUP as a result. The authors of the report by the AAUP investigating committee on the response to Hurricane Katrina wrote:

However cumbersome faculty consultation may at times be, the importance and value of such participation become even greater in exigent than in more tranquil times. The imperative that affected faculties be consulted and assume a meaningful role in making critical judgments reflects more than the values of collegiality; given the centrality of university faculties in the mission of their institutions, their meaningful involvement in reviewing and approving measures that vitally affect the welfare of the institution (as well as their own) becomes truly essential.

The Virginia Conference of the American Association of University Professors and the Faculty Senate of Virginia call upon the Board of Visitors to reverse this decision and to confirm a broader understanding of its fiduciary responsibilities to Radford University that includes the principles of academic freedom and shared governance. We also call upon President Hemphill to address the current circumstances in full accord with the sections declared inapplicable by the Board and to assure that the resolution itself is reversed.



Louise Freeman
President, Virginia Conference of the
American Association of University Professors



Carmen Rodríguez
President
Faculty Senate of Virginia

Cc:

Brian O. Hemphill, President, Radford University

Karen Castele, Secretary to the Board of Visitors, Radford University

Katie Hildren-Clouse, President, Faculty Senate of Radford University and Faculty Representative to the Board

Fran Bradford, Deputy Secretary of Education for Higher Education and Museums

Peter Blake, Director, State Council of Higher Education for Virginia

Deb Love, Senior Assistant Attorney General, Chief of the Education Section

Donna Henry, Chancellor, University of Virginia's College at Wise; Chair, Council of Presidents in Virginia