

# AAUP

American Association of University Professors

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*Academic Freedom for a Free Society*

VIA FACSIMILE (504-865-5202)

August 24, 2006

Dr. Scott S. Cowen  
President  
Tulane University  
6823 St. Charles Avenue  
New Orleans, Louisiana 70118

Dear President Cowen:

You wrote in your August 8 letter to my colleague, Jordan Kurland, that you will not be able to meet with our Special Committee when it is in New Orleans next week, but that you might be willing to do so in the future "if we can find a mutually agreeable time," and "if we clearly define and agree upon, in advance, the purpose and scope of the meeting, including the topics and questions to be discussed." We regret your having taken this position, especially because the heads of the city's public universities are arranging to meet next week with us without any prior agreement on the agenda.

Our Special Committee, following its discussions next week and its analysis of the voluminous written materials it has examined and dozens of individual interviews that committee members and staff conducted with current and former Tulane faculty members and others over the past two weeks, will begin formulating its report. We have sought, and continue to seek, from you and your fellow administrative officers at the university, both current and former, a fuller understanding of what you perceive to be the long-range ramifications of Hurricane Katrina and of how you believe the steps that have been taken regarding academic programs and personnel—in Tulane's case based in large measure on the adoption and implementation of the Plan for Renewal and involving the termination of numerous faculty appointments—will strengthen the university in coping with what lies ahead.

As you know from our previous correspondence, dating back to last January, our Association's concerns have focused on several key issues, including the adequacy of the faculty role in the decision-making processes that were followed by the administration and the board, the adequacy of the hearing procedures afforded to faculty members notified of the termination of their services, and the reported failure of the administration to make every effort to find other suitable positions for affected tenured faculty. Beyond these issues, we have several additional concerns arising from the interviews we had in New Orleans the past two weeks. First, we understand that the administration told members of the President's Faculty Advisory Committee (five members of that body have spoken to us) not to communicate with other Tulane faculty members, including members of the faculty senate, about their discussions with the administration, and that documents distributed during the PFAC-administration meetings could not leave the meeting room. Assuming the accuracy of the foregoing, and while appreciating that there may have been a need to limit the dissemination of confidential financial information, we are interested in knowing why the administration insisted on these restrictions. Second, some faculty members in the medical school who were issued

President Scott S. Cowen  
August 24, 2006  
Page Two

termination notices reportedly drew none of their salaries from Tulane but instead received salaries from grants, endowments for named chairs, and the like. The severance money paid to them would seem to have exceeded any remuneration they might have received from the university. How did these appointment terminations help offset the university's financial problems? Third, from what we gather occurred, some department chairs were informed of, but did not participate in, decisions about where within the university terminations were to occur and which individual faculty appointments were to be affected. In other departments, the chairs were apparently actively involved in these decisions. What accounts for these seeming differences? What steps did the administration take to ensure that all termination decisions were fairly reached and fairly carried out? Fourth, is the university still in a condition of financial exigency? Fifth, under the university's new "professors of practice" program, these professors are expected to be "brilliant" teachers. Inasmuch as these faculty members are not eligible for tenure, how will their academic freedom be safeguarded? These are among the matters we would hope to discuss with you and Tulane's other academic leaders.

Following our standard practice with investigations, before we publish a report we shall share a draft text with you and other principal parties at Tulane, inviting corrections and comments. We do believe, however, that it will be to our mutual advantage and contribute to the quality of our report if we have a candid discussion of our concerns while the preparation of the report is still in process rather than after a draft has been completed and approved for circulation. Accordingly, I ask that you give further thought to a meeting in New Orleans with you and other responsible Tulane administrative officers. It will probably not be feasible for our entire Special Committee to reassemble for that purpose, but we can send two or three members and a member of our staff. Select a date in September or early October that suits you, with a couple of alternatives, and let me know.

Sincerely,



B. Robert Kreiser  
Associate Secretary

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cc: Mr. Philip Greer, Chair, Board of Administrators  
Mr. Paul Barron, Interim Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost  
Ms. Yvette Jones, Senior Vice President for External Affairs and Chief Operating Officer  
Dr. Paul K. Whelton, Senior Vice President for the 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