

AAUP

American Association of University Professors

Academic Freedom for a Free Society

VIA FACSIMILE (860-832-2522)

October 19, 2011

Dr. Jack Miller
President
Central Connecticut State University
1615 Stanley Street
New Britain, Connecticut 06050-4010

Dear President Miller:

Members of the faculty in the Department of Psychology at Central Connecticut State University, with support from officers of the campus AAUP chapter, have sought the advice and assistance of the national office of the American Association of University Professors. They have done so as a result of actions taken by the CCSU administration to place restrictions on the number and nature of credit-bearing individualized mentor-based internships and independent studies courses in the department and to reduce faculty workload credits for supervision of internships. We understand that these experiential learning activities, specifically crafted to be directly related to the students' major area of study, have long been an integral—and by all accounts successful—part of the department's curriculum and programs of study. We understand further that the psychology faculty consider the administration's actions as posing issues of academic freedom and shared governance.

The interest of the Association in this matter stems, in part, from its longstanding commitment to academic freedom, the basic tenets of which are enunciated, as you are no doubt aware, in the enclosed 1940 *Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure*. That document, a joint formulation of the AAUP and the Association of American Colleges and Universities, has received the endorsement of more than 200 educational associations and disciplinary societies. We note that key provisions of the *Statement of Principles* have been incorporated in the collective bargaining agreement between CSU-AAUP and the board of trustees for the Connecticut State University System.

The AAUP supports the right of teachers “to select the materials, determine the approach to the subject, make the assignments, and assess student academic performance in teaching activities for which faculty members are individually responsible, without having their decisions subject to the veto of a department chair, dean, or other administrative officer.” Consistent with principles of academic freedom, the faculty in a department, both individually and collectively, should have the authority, as well as the responsibility, for setting pedagogical goals, for determining the content of the curriculum, and for devising particular programs of study appropriate for obtaining a degree—subject to review by a duly constituted faculty body.

In the absence of a cogent and well-articulated rationale, however, the administration should not infringe upon or restrict the faculty's exercise of its professional judgment in these matters.

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The Association's interest in this matter further stems from our longstanding concern for sound academic government, the principles of which are enunciated in the enclosed *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities*, originally formulated in conjunction with the American Council on Education and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. The AAUP adopted the document as policy, and the other two organizations commended it to the attention of their respective constituents. The *Statement on Government*, which embodies standards widely upheld in American higher education, rests on the premise of appropriately shared responsibility and cooperative action among governing board, administration, and faculty in determining educational policy and in resolving educational problems within the academic institution. It refers to "an inescapable interdependence" in this relationship which requires "adequate communication among these components, and full opportunity for appropriate joint planning and effort." It further asserts that "the interests of all are coordinate and related, and unilateral effort can lead to confusion or conflict."

Section V of the *Statement on Government* defines the central role of the faculty in institutional government, stating in pertinent part:

The faculty has primary responsibility for such fundamental areas as curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction . . . and those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process. On these matters the power of review or final decision lodged in the governing board or delegated by it to the president should be exercised adversely only in exceptional circumstances, and for reasons communicated to the faculty. It is desirable that the faculty should, following such communication, have opportunity for further consideration and further transmittal of its views to the president or board.

The particular authority and primary responsibility of the faculty in the decision-making processes of the academic institution in these areas derive from its special competence in the educational sphere. It follows from this proposition that the faculty should play an active and meaningful role in the development as well as in the revision of institutional policies and practices in those areas in which the faculty has primary responsibility.

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In her letter to you dated May 17, 2011, the chair of the psychology department, Professor Laura Bowman, noted that "[s]ound educational principles, faculty control over the curriculum, and shared governance are at stake here." She added: "Restricting internships and independent studies is shaping our program and interfering with curricular autonomy, rendering this an academic freedom issue" as well. The department, she wrote, has "repeatedly asked for a reasonable explanation and discussion about these issues, yet this has not occurred to the satisfaction of the department." She and her colleagues have complained that the restrictive policies that the administration has imposed upon the department, by modifying its academic offerings, are effectively reshaping a major feature of the psychology program

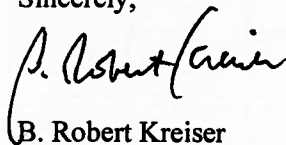
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and interfering both with the department's "right to determine the content and development of courses, curriculum, and programs of study within its discipline" (Paragraph 5.17 of the collective bargaining agreement) and with its "ability to organize a meaningful educational experience for [its] majors." These "reductions," they contend, "will harm our students by limiting their educational and potential career opportunities." As the department faculty have stated, "We are the best judges of what proportion of our program should be devoted to internships and independent studies." The Faculty Senate, which adopted a resolution in support of the department, has apparently agreed.

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We recognize that the information in our possession on which this letter is based has come to us exclusively from faculty sources at Central Connecticut State University, and that you may have additional information that would contribute to our understanding of the events we have recounted and the issues with which we are concerned. We would accordingly welcome your comments. Assuming the accuracy of the foregoing, we hope that the CCSU administration will agree to address the concerns of the Department of Psychology faculty and do so in a manner that is respectful of the principles of academic freedom and shared governance that we have commended to your attention.

Sincerely,



B. Robert Kreiser
Associate Secretary

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Enclosures (sent by surface mail)

cc: Dr. Carl Lovitt, Provost

Dr. Susan Pease, Dean, School of Arts and Sciences
Dr. Richard L. Roth, Associate Dean, School of Arts and Sciences
Ms. Anne B. Alling, Chief Human Resources Officer
Professor Candace Barrington, President, CCSU Faculty Senate
Professor Jason Jones, President, CCSU AAUP
Professor Vijay Nair, President, CSU AAUP
Professor Michael S. Gendron, CCSU AAUP Chapter Representative
Professor Laura L. Bowman, Co-Chair, Department of Psychology
Professor James Conway, Co-Chair, Department of Psychology