

AAUP

American Association of University Professors

Academic Freedom for a Free Society

November 16, 2011

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL AND FACSIMILE

Mr. Michael K. Young, President
University of Washington
301 Gerberding Hall
Box 351230
Seattle, Washington 98195

Dear President Young:

Faculty members at the University of Washington have advised the American Association of University Professors of yesterday's e-mail message from faculty senate vice-chair James Gregory to the faculty senate providing an update on the search for a new provost. Professor Gregory wrote as follows:

President Young told the Senate Executive Committee yesterday that he will soon announce a new provost and that, contrary to expectations, the faculty and campus community will not have an opportunity to meet the finalists or even learn their names before he makes his decision. A month ago, in a report to SEC . . . Vice Provost Paul Jenny indicated . . . that President Young was interested in having an open process for final candidates.

The president explained to SEC yesterday that he had changed his mind. He said that he initially favored an open search but that four out of the five finalists would not go forward if their names had to be made public.

Professor Gregory reported that several members of the SEC argued against this decision. They pointed out that the previous search for a provost had been open and that faculty members were expecting at least to learn the names of the finalists so that they could send comments to the search committee. They asked how the president "could be sure he was choosing the right person without hearing detailed feedback about candidates that an open final stage would yield," and they questioned whether a candidate who insisted on this degree of secrecy valued open and transparent communication to the extent necessary for effective service as provost.

As you are doubtless aware, principles of shared academic governance, as set forth in the AAUP's enclosed *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities*, encourage

components of an academic institution to engage in joint decision making:

The variety and complexity of the tasks performed by institutions of higher education produce an inescapable interdependence among governing board, administration, faculty, students, and others. The relationship calls for adequate communication among these components, and full opportunity for joint planning and effort.

One area of "joint planning and effort" is the selection of administrative officers, which "should be the responsibility of the president with the advice of, and in consultation with, the appropriate faculty."

The AAUP's derivative statement on *Faculty Participation in the Selection, Evaluation, and Retention of Administrators* (enclosed) further stipulates that "[t]he role of the faculty in the selection of an administrator other than a president should reflect the extent of legitimate faculty interest in the position." Administrators responsible for implementing academic policy

are by the nature of their duties more directly dependent upon faculty support. In such instances, the composition of the search committee should reflect the primacy of faculty interest, and the faculty component of the search committee should be chosen by the faculty of the unit or by a representative body of the faculty. The person chosen for an administrative position should be selected from among the names submitted by the search committee. The president, after fully weighing the views of the committee, will make the final choice. Nonetheless, sound academic practice dictates that the president not choose a person over the reasoned opposition of the faculty.

In view of these principles, we share the concern expressed by Professor Gregory and others that the faculty's involvement in the selection of a new provost will be inadequate unless the faculty or its elected representatives are consulted about the finalists. Surely, your administration would wish the newly appointed provost to be someone whom the faculty has played a meaningful role in selecting.

Sincerely,



Gregory F. Scholtz
Associate Secretary and Director
Department of Academic Freedom, Tenure, and Governance

Enclosures (by e-mail attachment)

cc: Vice Provost Jerry Baldasty, Chair, Provost Search Committee
Professor Susan Astley, Chair, Faculty Senate
Professor Janelle Taylor, President, University of Washington AAUP