

November 21, 2011

Chancellor Nancy L. Zimpher
State University of New York
State University Plaza
Albany, NY 12246

Dear Chancellor Zimpher,

We have received your letter to Professor Lee of 10 November 2011. Although addressed to him personally, we assume that it responds to our letter some six weeks ago (6 October 2011) to the co-chairs of the Binghamton University Presidential Search Committee.

On one hand, we reiterate our understanding that the presidential search process for Binghamton University needed to preserve a high degree of confidentiality; on the other hand, we are convinced that input from the designated leaders of the Faculty Senate at Binghamton University would be highly beneficial both to the selection of a president and to the smooth transition to a new president. Indeed, we disagree with the notion that the input of faculty sitting on the search committee can serve the same function as that of a group of faculty governance leaders who are far more familiar with the campus as a whole and who have demonstrated in very practical ways their deep commitment to its best interests. Moreover, we do not at all believe that members of a committee who have been intimately involved in the entire search can extract themselves sufficiently from the internal dynamics of the process at a late stage to provide the objective evaluation of candidates that is necessary. In contrast, this is what a small group of faculty leaders can do precisely because they have not been invested in the process to that point.

Furthermore, a secretive and insular process (in which faculty governance leaders were made aware that they were not trusted to adhere to signed confidentiality agreements) can only leave a new president facing serious challenges in establishing relationships with the campus onto which he or she is "parachuted." Your words to the SUNY Faculty Senate suggested that you are not insensitive to this issue, and yet you still made the regrettable decision to select a new president for Binghamton University without involving the faculty governance leaders here.

Your recent letter stated that to allow faculty leaders a role in the search would require allowing other campus constituencies also to play a separate role. However, even though search committees represent multiple campus constituencies, these constituencies are not co-equal. We recall the traditional roots of the university as an institution grounded in and centered on a corporate community of scholars -- self-governing and self-administering. The shared, primary values of such a group are collegiality and trust, not rivalry and suspicion. The extent to which they are honored correlates directly with the effectiveness with which a university campus can carry out its mission. This tradition still defines the ethos of a productive faculty; indeed, it is

Nancy Zimpher
Page 2
November 21, 2011

reflected in the Policies of the Board of Trustees that speak explicitly about the duties of three groups on a campus: the faculty, the College Council, and a small sampling of principal administrators, with the responsibilities of the faculty made very explicit: "The faculty of each college shall have the obligation to participate significantly in the initiation, development and implementation of the educational program." We believe that such a definition of faculty roles naturally includes involvement in the selection of a president. Quite reasonably, no group, neither staff nor students, other than the faculty and the College Council, is designated by the Policies of the Board of Trustees in a way suggesting that it should have a meaningful role in a presidential search.

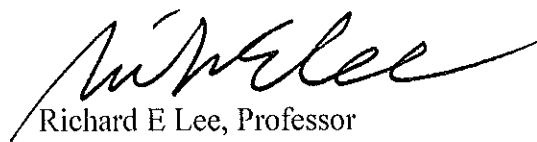
We are therefore, to say the least, disappointed by the position you have taken on the search for a president for Binghamton University. All the same, we remain committed to responsible shared governance, see it as essential to an effective university campus, and believe that, by extension, it benefits the entire SUNY system.

Collegially,

Faculty Governance Leaders



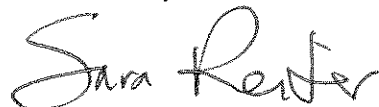
Susan Strehle, Distinguished Service Professor
Department of English, General Literature and
Rhetoric
Chair, Faculty Senate



Richard E Lee, Professor
Department of Sociology
Director, Fernand Braudel Center
Chair, Faculty Senate Executive Committee



Howard G. Brown, Professor
Department of History
Chair, Faculty Senate Budget Review
Committee



Sara Reiter, Professor
School of Management
Chair, Faculty Senate Educational Policies
and Procedures Committee



Peter Knuepfer, Associate Professor
Department of Geological Sciences and
Environmental Studies
Director, Environmental Studies Program
SUNY Faculty Senator



Rosmarie Morewedge, Associate Professor
Department of German and Russian Studies
SUNY Faculty Senator

c: David K. Lavalley, Interim Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs,
State University of New York
Kenneth O'Brien, President, University Faculty Senate