

AAUP

American Association of University Professors

Academic Freedom for a Free Society

February 14, 2011

VIA FACSIMILE (573-882-9907)

Dr. Brady J. Deaton
Chancellor
105 Jesse Hall
University of Missouri-Columbia
Columbia, Missouri 65211

Dear Chancellor Deaton:

Thank you for your letter of February 4, responding to mine of January 20, concerning the actions taken by the administration of the University of Missouri-Columbia in the case of Professor Thomas G. Engel.

You state that Dr. Engel has not been suspended but only “relieved of his teaching duties.” Our Association’s Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure has issued the enclosed report, *The Use and Abuse of Faculty Suspensions*, which discusses the removal of a professor from the classroom. The document quotes earlier AAUP reports which state that the action to bar a faculty member from the classroom “inflicts ignominy upon the teacher” and denies the individual “a right, in the case of the teaching profession, which is exercised not in private practice but through institutions. To deny a faculty member this opportunity without adequate cause, regardless of monetary compensation, is to deny him his basic professional rights. Moreover, to a good teacher, to be involuntarily idle is a serious harm in itself. . . .” In short, we see removal from normal teaching responsibilities, even where the faculty member retains research and service duties, as certainly a suspension.

You observe that the applicable provisions of the Collected Rules of the University of Missouri “require a full hearing before a faculty body before any final action is taken.” You add that, according to these Rules, a move to dismiss him for cause would entitle Professor Engel to “an additional full hearing before another faculty body.” Under the hearing procedures set forth in the Rules, which track the pertinent provisions of the enclosed joint 1958 *Statement on Procedural Standards in Faculty Dismissal Proceedings*, “Pending a final decision by the [Hearing] Committee, the Respondent will be suspended (or assigned to other duties in lieu of suspension) if immediate harm to someone is threatened by continuance. The Chancellor shall consult with an appropriate standing committee of the faculty before suspending the respondent or as soon as possible thereafter.” We question whether Professor Engel’s continuance in his teaching duties would have threatened “immediate harm.” We would also note that the administration does not appear to have consulted with the appropriate faculty body about removing Professor Engel from his teaching duties.

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We hope that this letter and our enclosed report will convince you that in removing Professor Engel from his teaching duties you have indeed suspended him, but perhaps without a real threat of immediate harm. We trust that henceforth he will be afforded the requisite protections of academic due process in the handling of his case.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Robert Kreiser". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

B. Robert Kreiser
Associate Secretary

BRK:id

Enclosures

cc: Dr. Brian Foster, Provost

Dr. James E. Thompson, Dean, College of Engineering

Professor Noah D. Manring, Chair, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering

Professor Leona Rubin, Chair, Faculty Council

Professor Stephen Montgomery-Smith, UMC AAUP Chapter

Professor Keith Hardeman, President, AAUP Missouri Conference

Professor Thomas G. Engel