



VIA ELECTRONIC AND US MAIL

August 2, 2012

Mr. Timothy M. Wolfe
President
University of Missouri System
321 University Hall
Columbia, Missouri 65211

Mr. David R. Bradley
Chair, Board of Curators
University of Missouri System
316 University Hall
Columbia, Missouri 65211

Dear President Wolfe and Chair Bradley:

Officers of the University of Missouri, Columbia AAUP chapter and numerous of their faculty colleagues at the Columbia and other UM campuses have consulted the American Association of University Professors as a result of the announcement on May 24 that the UM administration, with the concurrence of the UM System's board of curators, was closing down the University of Missouri Press.

We understand that the action to close the press is being taken on grounds that the press's operation in its present form, requiring an annual six-figure subsidy from the university, is no longer financially viable and that "in this economic time the current model of the press is not sustainable." Members of the faculty who have contacted us complain that the process the administration followed in reaching the decision to close the press (and in subsequently announcing the launching of what has been termed a "new press model" and a "reimagined press that will use innovative techniques for scholarly communication") involved no meaningful consultation with the faculty nor any discussion with, let alone advance warning to, the editor-in-chief and the affected staff, many of them with long years of editorial experience and exemplary professional service, and that, in the face of conflicting philosophies of press management, little or no consideration was given to alternate organizational or financial models that might have ensured the press's continued viability. In so acting, these faculty members contend, the administration and board bypassed the well-established governance role of elected faculty bodies at various levels of the university, disregarding the legitimate role of the faculty in institutional decision making. They have also questioned the financial necessity of the actions that have been taken, including the termination of the appointments of ten skilled professionals, and have called into question the academic and educational soundness of the decisions—both the closing of the "old press" and its replacement by a "new model"—and the misplaced priorities they charge against the administration and the board in making them.

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Our Association's interest in this situation stems from a longstanding concern for sound academic governance, the principles of which are enunciated in the enclosed *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities*, initially 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

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shared responsibility and cooperative action among the governing board, the administration, and the 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.”

As one facet of the “interdependence” called for under the *Statement on Government*, Section II of the document provides that “[s]uch matters as major changes in . . . the relative emphasis to be given to the various elements of the educational and research program should involve participation of governing board, administration, and faculty prior to final decision.” With regard to the “internal operations of the institution,” the statement further provides that

[t]he framing and execution of long-range plans, one of the most important aspects of institutional responsibility, should be a central and continuing concern in the academic community.

Effective planning demands that the broadest possible exchange of information and opinion should be the rule for communication among the components of a college or university.

With regard to the internal operations of the institution, the *Statement on Government* further provides that

The allocation of resources among competing demands is central in the formal responsibility of the governing board, in the administrative authority of the president, and in the educational function of the faculty. Each component should therefore have a voice in the determination of short- and long-range priorities, and each should receive appropriate analyses of past budgetary experience, reports on current budgets and expenditures, and short- and long-range budgetary projections. The function of each component in budgetary matters should be understood by all; the allocation of authority will determine the flow of information and the scope of participation in decisions.

The allocation of financial resources is an essential element of the governance of an academic institution and plainly a complex and crucial task for any college or university to carry out. The AAUP has long held that the various institutional constituents should participate in financial decisions as well as in the setting of priorities according to their particular expertise and responsibilities. The AAUP’s enclosed derivative statement on *The Role of the Faculty in Budgetary and Salary Matters* calls for the faculty, “in its primary responsibility for the educational function of the institution, to participate . . . in . . . budgetary matters primarily as they impinge on that function.”

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Faculty supporters of the University of Missouri Press contend that such an entity is an important part of a university’s research mission, especially at a member institution of the Association of American Universities, and that a decision regarding the allocation of resources necessary to ensure its continued viability involves an

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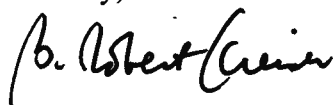
expression of academic values about scholarly and educational matters that should be within the faculty's purview. They have pointed out that just as the closing of the press was announced, the administration unveiled a costly plan for expanding the university's athletics program, and they complain that the decision to commit large sums of money to athletics at the expense of academics are a clear manifestation of misplaced priorities. Whatever the faculty's formal or specific authority/responsibility for oversight of the press might be under the University of Missouri's official policies, it seems plain that the administration and board should have consulted with the faculty before reaching the decisions it did regarding the press. The process reportedly followed by the administration, in suddenly announcing the closure of the existing press and replacing it with an experimental "new press model," seems to us at odds with the aforementioned principles of shared responsibility and cooperative action. Our experience has shown that a university suffers when its faculty has come to perceive that its legitimate prerogatives have been disregarded through its exclusion from key decision-making processes in which it should play a role.

We understand that on July 25 the members of the MU Faculty Council unanimously adopted a resolution calling on President Wolfe "to postpone the closure of the University Press pending discussion with the faculty regarding the future of the Press," and that you have agreed to meet with the Faculty Council leadership. We hope that the meeting will result in further consideration of your May 24 decision.

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We appreciate that you may have additional information that would contribute to our understanding of the issues with which we are concerned and would therefore welcome your comments.

Sincerely,



B. Robert Kreiser
Associate Secretary

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Enclosures

cc: Mr. Wayne Goode, Vice Chair, Board of Curators
Dr. Steven W. Graham, Senior Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, UM System
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Professor Larry G. Gerber, Chair, AAUP Committee on College and University Governance