



Recent Hiring Controversies and their Implications for Shared Governance at the University of Illinois

Dear Colleagues:

This is an extremely dangerous moment for the future of shared governance and academic freedom at UIUC. First in the case of lecturer James Kilgore and now again in the case of Professor Steven Salaita, decisions made by the faculty and the unit administration have been set aside by campus administration. The Salaita case marks the second time in three months that the administration, at the behest of the Board of Trustees (BOT), has reversed a hiring decision made by faculty, unit executive officers, and the dean of LAS. (The Board's intervention is strongly suggested in the Kilgore case, where we are still awaiting some disposition from a university committee. It is specifically confirmed in Salaita's case, by Chancellor Wise's letter). In both cases the negative decisions were made quickly and without consulting faculty.

In her revocation letter to Prof. Salaita, Chancellor Wise wrote that she thought it was unlikely that the BOT would approve his contract. The highest academic office of this campus has a responsibility to do more than gauge the direction the wind may blow at a BOT meeting. More and more, faculty shared governance is becoming political meteorology.

The administration has the statutory right to take such actions and the BOT has the right to intervene, but this is the vital question:

Is this how you want hiring decisions to be made at UIUC?

What does this mean for shared governance in perhaps the most important decisions we make as an academic institution? We support the national and international efforts to encourage Chancellor Wise to reverse this decision and follow the recommendations of the faculty and administrators who followed the search and know the case. We urge you, our colleagues, to write to the chancellor, the BOT, and public officials calling for a reversal of this decision and of the earlier intervention in the case of James Kilgore. We also urge the academic senate, silent so far regarding the Salaita case, to take up the issue and support the faculty's rights with regard to hiring. Many CFA members are already working on the issue. In the long run, however, the faculty needs an independent voice and that means unionization.

Only a strong faculty union can guarantee that faculty enjoy academic freedom, free from undue political interference.

The Non-Tenure Track colleagues have already won union recognition on our campus. We urge you to join the campaign to organize an AAUP/AFT/IFT local for Tenure Stream Faculty here at Illinois.

To get involved, and for further information, please consult the CFA webpage (www.cfaillinois.org), follow us on Facebook and Twitter at Campus Faculty Association, and contact us directly by email <campusfacultyassoc@gmail.com>.

Sincerely,
The Executive Committee
Campus Faculty Association, AFT/IFT/AAUP
University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign