



## FACULTY ASSEMBLY

September 21, 2018

Dear Mr. Carlini, Dr. O'Donnell, Mr. Moreland, and Ms. Joiner Brady:

Thank you for meeting with members of the Executive Committee of the CUA Faculty Assembly on September 12th. We appreciate you taking the time to listen to our concerns, and we share your desire to improve the alignment between the Board, Administration, and Faculty and to work together towards the good of the University. We also appreciate your willingness to maintain an open channel of communication between the Board and the Faculty Assembly, and we look forward to working with you to identify and address the challenges we face at the Catholic University of America.

We requested a meeting with you in June 2018 after the faculty held a vote of no confidence in the Provost and the President where, of the 225 faculty who voted, 76% have no confidence in the Provost while only 12% affirm confidence, and 78% have no confidence in the President while only 13% affirm confidence. As Dr. Venigalla Rao described in our meeting last week, the dissatisfaction with the university leadership dates back to 2014, when the faculty overwhelmingly opposed the renewal of John Garvey as President. Indeed, the faculty's current concerns with the lack of coherent vision for the University, failed leadership, lack of transparency and accountability in governance and finances, ineffective development, declining enrollment, and extremely low faculty morale are now longstanding.

We hope to work with the Board of Trustees in order to bring about changes that strengthen shared governance, establish true financial transparency, and nurture a culture of welcome, collegiality, and fairness for all. In our meeting, Dr. O'Donnell asked for concrete steps the Board and Administration can take to address our concerns. Below we have listed five concrete recommendations that, if carried out, would strengthen the University by promoting the alignment of the faculty, the Administration, and the Board of Trustees:

1. **Formally reaffirm the University's commitment to tenure.** The faculty needs a clear and definitive written statement from the Board of Trustees that it stands behind the established understanding of tenure as an indefinite academic appointment that can be terminated only for cause, financial exigency, or program discontinuation.
2. **Replace the current Academic Senate with a Faculty Senate.** Establish a committee from the Faculty Assembly and Academic Senate to review model structures for a Faculty Senate, and recommend revisions to the Faculty Handbook to establish a new Faculty Senate. While the Faculty Senate is being established, the Board of Trustees should create three voting seats on the Academic Senate to be held by representatives of the Faculty Assembly.
3. **Create a University Ombudsman to ensure that all actions of governance and administration respect the rules and procedures set forth in the Faculty Handbook and in the University's policies.** This will provide a much-needed mechanism to resolve disputes over interpretations of the governing documents of the University.

4. **Enhance communication between the Board of Trustees and the Faculty Assembly.** In addition to the regular Faculty Assembly and Board of Trustees meeting once per semester, establish a direct channel by which the Faculty Assembly can communicate with the Board when issues of concern arise between meetings. Additionally, allow faculty representatives to the Board to contribute to deliberations at those meetings.
5. **Devise and launch new, regularized data reporting structures that assure transparency in the areas of financial performance, student recruitment and retention, and reports such as demographic projections driving leadership decision-making.** With respect to finances in particular, we are interested in hearing more from you about where you believe the numbers we presented diverge from your own and why.

Taken together, we believe that these steps would significantly strengthen the clarity and coherence necessary for the effective alignment of the faculty, administration, and trustees. Given the gravity of our concerns and the significant work needed to carry out these recommendations, we would like to meet with you again this semester, preferably in October or November, so that we can begin to take steps together toward the resolution of the University's long-standing problems.

We look forward to hearing from you soon. You may contact the Faculty Assembly Chair, Dr. Linda Plitt Donaldson at [donaldson@cua.edu](mailto:donaldson@cua.edu) or by phone 202-319-5478, or the Vice-Chair, Dr. Binh Tran at [tran@cua.edu](mailto:tran@cua.edu) or 202-319-4285, to coordinate our next meeting.

Sincerely,

Dr. Linda Plitt Donaldson, Faculty Assembly Chair; National Catholic School of Social Service  
Dr. Binh Tran, Faculty Assembly Vice-Chair; School of Engineering  
Dr. Stephen McKenna, Faculty Assembly Executive Committee; Arts & Sciences, Media Studies  
Dr. Venigalla Rao, Faculty Assembly Executive Committee; Arts & Sciences, Biology  
Dr. Julia Young, Faculty Assembly Executive Committee; Arts & Sciences, History

cc: Additional Faculty Assembly Executive Committee Members

Dr. William Barbieri, School of Theology and Religious Studies  
Dr. Ann Cederna, School of Architecture and Planning  
Dr. Katherine Jansen, School of Arts and Sciences, History  
Prof. David Lipton, Columbus School of Law  
Dr. Michael Mack, School of Arts & Sciences, English  
Dr. Andrew Weaver, Rome School of Music, Drama & Art

cc: Other Faculty Representatives Present at the Meeting

Dr. Claudia Bornholdt, School of Arts & Sciences, Modern Languages  
Dr. Kurt Martens, School of Canon Law  
Dr. Patrick Tuite, Rome School of Music, Drama, and Art