

American Association of University Professors

Radford University Chapter

An Open Letter to the President, Board of Visitors, and Faculty of Radford University:

We, the members of the Radford University AAUP Chapter write to express our grave concern that the utter disregard by the Board of Visitors and President Hemphill of the deep traditions of academies of higher learning regarding shared governance, faculty rights, and the sanctity of a Faculty Handbook. Their recent decisions put them in violation of a 200 year tradition in USA academies of primary faculty responsibility for the curriculum, traditions that have always taken in enhanced significance in times of crisis like the present.

The faculty have a valued point of view and are stakeholders... why wouldn't you use them? Work with them? Why limit their input so severely?

We are aware of the crisis created by the COVID-19 pandemic and agree that a serious reexamination of the fiscal future of Radford University is necessary. However, fiscal exigency has not been declared. In the absence of such an extreme crisis, the attack of the tradition of shared governance by the President and Board of Visitors is entirely uncalled for and unprecedented.

Hemphill offers that the Board's actions could only possibly be justified by financial exigency. Does that mean that we're in an undeclared financial exigency? If the Board's actions were necessary, why haven't lots of other Boards done it? Aren't they facing the same crisis?

National AAUP finds the situation at Radford entirely unwarranted and in fundamental violation of AAUP national principles for credible academic governance. It is also in direct violation of the national AAUP's *Principles and Standard for the Covid Crisis*. The suspension of portions of the Faculty Handbook is entirely excessive and places Radford University among academic institutions incapable of living up to national standards for shared governance and faculty rights.

President Hemphill is asking us to legitimize his choice A or B process by having the senate voting on it. There is inherent inequity in the President's options and they have been put forth to create buy-in. This ultimatum potentially creates a politically-charged environment, establishing a situation where the Senate would vote for a motion that would appear to segregate their peers. The fundamental issue is that our university faculty body will be complicit in with these options; rescinding earned professional rights. Why?

The ultimatum offered does not address access to data said to warrant the scope of the crisis as put forth by the BOV. Faculty should not be complicit in this false dilemma that is premised on a suspension of the Handbook and a denial of their shared governance rights.

If we become complicit in these degrading options, Radford University will be fundamentally changed.

How likely will shared governance be in our future, if we abandon it now? We share these circumstances, on some level or another we share fates. Why shouldn't we be involved in the formulation of options when we are the backbone of the university? Don't we have the capacity to address these circumstances collectively?

Fiscal exigency has not been declared, yet we are caving in to its conditions nevertheless. Faculty should refuse these false options and insist on restoring the Handbook and real participation in the formulation of our options.