

香港浸會大學教職員工會
Hong Kong Baptist University Faculty and Staff Union

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NEWSLETTER (216)

Updates on the Dismissal Case of an Assistant Academic Registrar

December 22, 2010

Dear Colleagues,

Regarding the termination of the appointment of an Assistant Academic Registrar at our University, the Personnel Office and the Academic Registrar have so far given no response to the Union's announcement on June 29 which outlined a series of questions about the problematic procedures,. However, the incident has not yet come to an end. The Union learned that more than 30 academic staff have cosigned a letter to the P/VC, Prof. Albert Chan, to confirm the good performance and dedicated working attitude of this colleague in the past years. They have also expressed their puzzle over the dismissal which was "under rather unusual and obscure circumstances" and request the University to consider her reinstatement.

Those academic staff are mostly Professors and Chair Professors who are (or have been) Department Heads or Program Directors. They have close working relationship with that colleague. Though academics are busy with their teaching and research, they have come forward to express their views and concerns about the case. It shows that the frustration and worries brought by this case have not been relieved among colleagues.

The colleague has also made a complaint to the Council. The Council Chair informed her in September that in considering the appeal, the former P/VC interviewed 7 additional staff and then decided to uphold the termination decision. That colleague then approached the Personnel Office for a copy of the appeal meeting records according to the "Personal Data and Privacy Ordinance". However, the Personnel Office failed to respond to the request. After more than a month, the request was made again through a solicitor and surprisingly, the reply received was "**there is no such record**". The University was also requested to confirm whether the "pertinent policy guidelines and procedures" (including the termination was approved by the P/VC and the appeal was also considered by him) were duly approved by the Council and provide the approval date and the minutes in support. Again, there has been **NO** response so far.

There are already a lot of doubts regarding the procedures followed this case. Now, with more and more irregularities revealed, we have to consider the way it is handled shocking. We have to ask:

1. The appeal meeting records are important records. Why could such important records be non-existent in the Personnel Office? Whether or not there was any interview? Does it involve fabricating evidence or gross neglect of duty? How could it be concluded that the appeal was properly and fairly conducted?
2. The Personnel Office is under the direct supervision of the VP(AS) who is also the Council Secretary. Did he inform the Council during discussion of this dismissal case that such crucial records were actually non-existent and tell the reason why? If not, is it a deceit to the Council? Have both the discussion and decision of the Council been misled by the presumption of a properly held appeal meeting?
3. The Personnel Office claimed that this termination case “has properly followed all procedures”. Then why can’t the Council Secretary confirm whether the procedures have been approved by the Council and provide the approval date and the minutes in support? If the procedures have been duly approved by the Council, why did the Council approve such procedures with conflicting roles? What were the discussion and consideration then? If a set of procedures that have not been approved by the Council is used to terminate a staff, it is like lynching and is a very serious matter.
4. The Academic Registrar requested the University to initiate the termination process after he had assumed duty for 15 months, accusing the staff for “in-subordinate behavior”. He has never conducted any performance appraisal for the staff or issued any warning letters. The reason he gave to the University was “did not want to damage the working relationship”. If such explanation is acceptable, does it mean that all other supervisors could dismiss their subordinates without performance appraisals and warning letters using the same excuse? The Academic Registrar did not provide any documentary proofs for the accusations and blame the sub-ordinate for his own “management crisis”. Could other supervisors dismiss sub-ordinates with immediate effect by doing the same and put the blame on a sub-ordinate for his/her own incompetence?

The queries stipulated above have long-term impact on colleagues and the University’s administration. The Council Secretary and the Personnel Office must answer them in detail in order to relieve colleagues from worries. With more and more serious irregularities revealed, the Union would like to request the University to settle the case and rectify the injustice done as soon as possible. Otherwise, the incident will damage the University’s image and continue to be a black mark in the University’s management.

Thank you for your attention.

Yours faithfully,

Executive Committee
Hong Kong Baptist University Faculty And Staff Union