



SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENT COUNCIL

December 8, 2017

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1400 Douglas Drive, MC 6801
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Formal complaint against Chancellor Carlo Montemagno

Dear President Dunn, Vice President Colwell:

On behalf of The Graduate and Professional Student Council (GPSC), I am writing to issue a formal complaint against Chancellor Carlo Montemagno in the execution of his duties as Chancellor of Southern Illinois University, Carbondale under Board of Trustees Policy 3.F.3, Board of Trustees Statute 3.6, and Policy 7.I through the creation of a climate of intimidation cultivated by the Chancellor during meetings held with constituency bodies and members of the campus community.

Board of Trustees Policies 3.F.3 states,

The student constituency bodies shall be the official organization designated to represent students in matters pertaining to student welfare, student activities, student participation in campus affairs, student participation in institutional planning and administration, and student opinion.

Board of Trustees Statute 3.6 provides the following responsibility of the Chancellor:

provides necessary leadership in educational development, such leadership to be consistent with appropriate internal delegation of policy responsibility to the faculty and other constituencies, with encouragement and advice from these groups wherever delegation is not appropriate

Board of Trustees Policy 7.I., which applies to all Community members, including the Chancellor, states:

Community members will nurture a climate of care, concern, fairness, and civility towards others while recognizing and embracing each individual's dignity, freedom and diversity.

Over the course of the Fall 2017 semester, Chancellor Montemagno has refused all requests of GPSC for attendance at regularly scheduled, or special meetings of the general body of GPSC. The Chancellor has additionally refused all private meetings with the President of GPSC without explanation. This conduct represented a break from the established behavior of the Office of the Chancellor during the preceding

semesters, including the use of Board of Trustees Policy 2.C.F.1 last semester, which requires the Chancellor to notify constituency bodies in the event of a financial emergency.

This conduct also represents a contradiction in his behavior towards other constituency groups, specifically Faculty Senate and Undergraduate Student Government. While the Chancellor is an ex-officio member of the Faculty Senate and is invited to attend their regular meetings along with the Co-Provosts, his ex-officio status does not explain his willingness to attend special meetings with the Faculty Senate, specifically on November 7th, for the purposes of discussing his proposed reorganization, while simultaneously refusing similar requests from GPSC. In keeping with Statute 3.6, the Chancellor has sought the advice and encouragement of Faculty Senate in institutional planning, but has failed to fulfill this responsibility where GPSC is concerned.

The Chancellor has also met regularly with Undergraduate Student President Joshua Bowens, allegedly at the request of President Bowens, while refusing to commit to similar meetings with the President of GPSC. This differential treatment resulted in the Chancellor directing President Bowens to develop a "student honor code," an initiative that President Bowens later sought GPSC assistance with.

To be clear, the Chancellor did not consult GPSC in the formation of the committee to draft the proposed "student honor code;" these responsibilities were delegated to President Bowens. As a result, the committee nor the "action plan" briefly described by President Bowens in his invitation to GPSC, were produced in conjunction with GPSC. Further, GPSC was invited by President Bowens himself to participate as representatives on the "Student Honor Code Committee," and not as chairs or to direct the functions of the committee.

The Chancellor, by his own admission during the November 28th Constituency Heads meeting, did not seek out the information himself, and expressed no knowledge of the operation of academic misconduct or the academic grievance policies despite delegating the restructuring of said policies to an undergraduate. To his credit, the chancellor did direct GPSC to engage in a similar initiative at the graduate level *only after* the Chancellor was informed of the difference in policies affecting undergraduate and graduate students during the November 28th Constituency Heads meeting.

This decision was made nearly three months after his initial announcement of the "honor code" during his open forum, and his subsequent delegation of the task to Co-Provost Chevalier and President Bowens. He also did not direct Co-Provost Chevalier to gather the necessary information, as indicated during a meeting with GPSC representatives, November 29th, wherein the GPSC representatives had to clarify the graduate academic grievance and academic misconduct policies for the Co-Provost in the course of explaining the process that GPSC has adopted for fulfilling the directive of the Chancellor.

The Chancellor further refuses to engage graduate student concerns with his proposed reorganization. Upon the initial release of his "strawman" proposal, the Chancellor declined to provide an understanding of the effect the proposed reorganization would have upon graduate education, initially stating that there would be no effect on graduate education, despite the proposed relocation of faculty. The "Vision 2025 FAQ" maintains that "restructuring itself does not affect graduate programs," despite repeated presentation of feedback from GPSC on the reputational and disciplinary effects this reorganization, specifically the elimination of departments, will have on graduate education. This feedback is available via the GPSC website and has been included with this letter.

The Chancellor was further stated to have been “talked off a cliff” by the Co-Provost during a November 2nd meeting with GPSC representatives, a statement which was initially made during an October 10th meeting with Graduate Assistants United, and repeated in part by Co-Provost DiLalla during a November 29th meeting with GPSC representatives, where the complete elimination of non-grant funded graduate assistantships is concerned. This decision, made without consulting graduate faculty, or GPSC, was strongly opposed, and eventually walked back to the current, unacceptable, initiative to eliminate graduate students as instructors of record. This decision, again, was made without appropriate consultation with affected academic programs or GPSC.

To be clear, it is only within the past two weeks that the chancellor has begun to seek consultation with affected units, despite a directive delivered by Co-Provost DiLalla, in an e-mail dated October 27th, that units should expect “some adjustments to the (GA) budget might be required in order to staff courses formerly taught independently by Gas.” This consultation comes, in part, due to the provision of information concerning the effect of this proposed change on the ability of some units to deliver course content, and mounting pressure by faculty and students.

In the context of the Graduate School itself, it has been reported to GPSC by the Graduate School that the Chancellor has failed to provide consistent direction as to the activities of the graduate school, beyond the abrupt changes in his position where graduate student funding and graduate student teaching is concerned. It has come to the attention of GPSC that the Chancellor has refused to meet with the previous Dean of the Graduate School, Yueh-Ting Lee, to discuss the implications of the “Vision 2025” plan and possible avenues for the development of graduate education at this institution.

GPSC does not feel that the above pattern of action constitutes “necessary leadership in educational development,” where graduate education at this institution is concerned. The unwillingness of the Chancellor to engage in consultation with constituency bodies, as well as to perform the necessary information gathering, or to direct his subordinates to engage in the necessary information gathering, constitutes a failure in this responsibility.

Moreover, as Graduate Council and GPSC exist, in part, to provide the Chancellor with advice regarding the matters above, it is the position of GPSC that not only is the Chancellor failing to fulfill his responsibility to provide “necessary leadership in educational development,” he is also unwilling or unable to delegate to constituency bodies, policy responsibility, except when it aligns with his pre-existing intentions for the institution.

To be clear: the Chancellor has not explained this disparate treatment towards graduate education when requested.

The unwillingness of the Chancellor to communicate with GPSC has been noted by his subordinates. During a meeting following the 11/2/17 Graduate Council meeting, Acting Co-Provost David DiLalla noted a “break down” in the communication between the office of the Chancellor and GPSC. While he did not indicate the source of the “break down,” the Co-Provost recognized it as a problem that affected the ability of the Chancellor to act in the best interest of graduate and professional students. On his own initiative, and at the request of GPSC, the Co-Provost has initiated monthly meetings with GPSC to ensure the free flow of information between GPSC and the office of the Chancellor, in spite of the resistance of the Chancellor.

In public communications and written addresses indicating appropriate feedback mechanisms for commentary on his proposed academic reorganization, the Chancellor has consistently declined to mention GPSC as mechanism for feedback, specifically as the proposed academic reorganization, and "Vision 2025" plan, constitutes "institutional planning and administration" under Board of Trustees policies 3.F.3. The clearest example of this refusal is his Vision 2025 FAQ which states "The chancellor's office will work with the Faculty Senate and Graduate Council to receive feedback through formal mechanisms." Under Board of Trustees Policy 3.F.3, GPSC is a "formal mechanism" for feedback on the proposed reorganization by virtue of its role as the official representative body of graduate and professional students.

When GPSC has provided feedback through documents or in meetings, the Chancellor, or his designee, has opted to disregard all elements of the provided feedback that do not align with his proposed direction. Specifically, the unwillingness of the Chancellor, and his designees, to consider alternatives to the elimination of graduate students as instructors of record, or to consider the demonstrated impact of the proposed elimination of departments, in light of the provided feedback from GPSC, indicates a willful disregard for the input provided by GPSC in its role as the body designated to represent graduate and professional students.

The above represents a disregard for the responsibility of the Chancellor to engage in "leadership in educational development... with encouragement and advice from these groups wherever delegation is not appropriate." Per the GPSC comprehensive response to the "strawman proposal," and the GPSC resolution opposing the elimination of all academic departments, GPSC has demonstrated that it does not encourage the current direction of the leadership of the Chancellor in educational development, specifically where graduate education is concerned, but is willing to engage in dialogue with the Chancellor.

GPSC has expressed serious concerns with regards to many of the proposals outlined on the Chancellor's Vision 2025 FAQ, and in his proposed academic reorganization plan, in an effort to provide the Chancellor with a broad context where the development of graduate and professional student education at this institution is concerned. The Chancellor has, thus far, opted to ignore the provided concern in the context of the development of graduate education, stating specifically that many items that affect graduate education were not open to discussion.

In light of this, GPSC cannot state that it has either advised or encouraged the current direction of educational leadership adopted by the Chancellor, and therefore alleges that the Chancellor is acting in violation of statute 3.6. To be clear, GPSC actions this semester have indicated in no uncertain terms that it does not encourage the current direction of educational leadership indicated by the Chancellor nor is the Chancellor acting under the advice of GPSC.

GPSC recognizes that Board of Trustees policy establishes only that the Chancellor treat GPSC as the official mechanism for student input, it is the position of GPSC that failure to give the input provided due consideration violates the intent of policies 3.f.3, whereas the failure of the Chancellor to engage GPSC as the official representative body of graduate and professional students, specifically in institutional planning, constitutes a violation of the letter of policies 3.f.3.

While the above are formal violations of Board Policies 3.f.3 and Statutes 3.6 where the responsibility delegated to GPSC is concerned, the conduct of the Chancellor during meetings has resulted the creation of a culture of intimidation wherein institutional agents and members of the campus

community are fearful of expressing dissent to any element of initiatives proposed by the Chancellor in fear of reprisal or retaliation. The creation of this climate constitutes an ongoing violation of Policy 7.1. The Chancellor maintains this climate through interrupting, dismissing, ignoring, and treating with disrespect those members of the campus community who object to his initiatives.

The behavior of the Chancellor is most apparent during the October 5th and December 2nd Graduate Council meetings wherein the Chancellor sought to control the discourse in the meeting by interrupting and shouting over GPSC representatives when they sought to raise points of contention with his proposals. GPSC representatives have reported similar conduct from the Chancellor during meetings with the Graduate Council Executive Committee when challenged on elements of his plan they found questionable and during meetings with other constituency bodies.

Because of the conduct of the Chancellor in preceding October 5th Graduate Council meeting, and his ongoing pattering of interrupting her during her recognized speaking time, during the November 2nd Graduate Council Meeting, a representative from GPSC was compelled to request that the Chancellor treat her "with the same respect he showed (her) male counterparts," a request to which the Chancellor did not reply, however, he later sought to dismiss the concerns of this representative, once more interrupting her during her speaking time to demand "do you have a job," before proceeding to address another member of the Graduate Council.

During the same November 2nd meeting, the Chancellor proceeded to question the suitability of a non-white GPSC representative in their responsibilities as instructors of record in their own courses, demanding of the representative their qualifications for instruction, despite being informed earlier by this representative of the extensive process for application to both of his teaching responsibilities. The chancellor proceeded to disregard the provided process, restating his belief that graduate students were not suitable as instructors of record. This treatment was dissimilar to the treatment of a white male GPSC representative.

GPSC representatives have observed that the Chancellor directs the majority of his dismissive and hostile behavior towards marginalized students, observations which have been supported by members of the Graduate Council. Following the October 5th and November 2nd Graduate Council meeting, members of Graduate Council and GPSC representatives expressed concern over the direction of hostility towards marginalized members of the body, specifically marginalized GPSC representatives; one faculty representative indicated an unwillingness to bring these concerns to light out of fear of public reprisal from the Chancellor.

The Chancellor has further depicted the presentation of contradictions in his positions, specifically in his positions on graduate students as instructors of record, as "misinformation," despite these positions being communicated to GPSC and other constituency bodies by the Chancellor himself or by designees of the Chancellor. The Chancellor has further evidenced a willingness to denigrate opponents to his proposals, as indicated by the transcript of his October 19th open forum wherein the Chancellor described opponents to his proposals as "voices who have no interest in you achieving your ambitions, but instead because of lack of heart, will actively point to shadows in the dark to inject uncertainty and unfounded fear."

GPSC does not view the above conduct as in keeping with the conduct expected of the Chancellor of Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, and therefore in violation of Board of Trustees Policies 7.1,

which states, “Community members will nurture a climate of care, concern, fairness, and civility towards others while recognizing and embracing each individual’s dignity, freedom and diversity.”

To remedy this situation, GPSC recommends that Chancellor Montemagno be directed to take the following actions:

- Upon receipt of search waiver approval for the appointment of an Interim Associate Dean and Director of the Graduate School, consult with GPSC concerning appropriate candidates for this position. Further, in keeping with appropriate university policy, grant GPSC representation on any search committee formed to hire a permanent Associate Dean and Director of the Graduate School. GPSC makes this request based on the observation that Chancellor Montemagno is receptive to advice provided by senior administration.
- Consult with GPSC about appropriate candidates for Acting Dean of the Graduate School while simultaneously following the procedures outlined in Board of Trustees Policy and in keeping with the Graduate School Operating papers. GPSC makes this recommendation in light of the necessity of a positive working relationship between GPSC and the senior administrator in the Graduate School.
- Engage with GPSC to develop a process of consultation with graduate and professional students in the schools proposed under the academic reorganization plan to receive feedback on the proposed reorganization. The Chancellor has directed the Acting Co-Provosts to engage in this process at the faculty level: we request a similar process at the graduate level.
- Engage with GPSC to receive graduate and professional student feedback on the proposed “Vision 2025” plan in an official capacity through forums or attendance at a regular or special meeting of GPSC. GPSC makes this recommendation in light of the insistence of the Chancellor that the elements outlined in “Vision 2025” are not strictly tied to reorganization and may proceed absent reorganization.
- Provide all university stakeholders peer reviewed research indicating the efficacy of the proposed reorganization for both undergraduate and graduate education, where issues of recruitment, retention, and enrollment are concerned. This research should also indicate the alignment of the proposed reorganization with disciplinary best practices as well as impact of the proposed reorganization on departments. GPSC makes this request in keeping with a concern outlined in the GPSC Resolution Opposing the Elimination of All Academic Departments.
- Provide the Graduate Council and GPSC evidence in support of his intention to eliminate graduate students as instructors of record which includes the effect that this decision will have on units across campus, how this decision will accomplish the mission of the university where graduate education is concerned; and, peer institutions of comparable size, scope, and institutional resources where this decision has been implemented successfully.
- Engage in the consideration of alternative plans for his proposed reorganization, both faculty directed and administratively directed, through a process of shared governance, that includes the deployment of institutional resources through the formation of committees at all levels, to determine the best course of action for the institution. GPSC makes this request in light of its

understanding that some elements of the proposed reorganization are beneficial to its constituents, and believes that these elements should be retained in future revisions, whereas others will have detrimental effects on GPSC constituents and should be reconsidered.

- Upon appointment, engage the Assistant Dean and Director of the Graduate School and the Acting Dean of the Graduate School, in conversation with the Graduate Council, to review the “Where Shall our SIUC Graduate Education Go? A Strategic Dialogue” document produced by the previous Dean of the Graduate School for incorporation into the “Vision 2025” plan. GPSC makes this recommendation in light of the lack of any substantive engagement with the long-standing issues facing the Graduate School, and the need to couple a review of the Graduate School with academic reorganization.

It is the understanding of GPSC that the above recommendations are not beyond the scope of the authority of the System President, or the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

It is also the understanding of GPSC that the Board of Trustees takes seriously perceived or actual violations of its policies and statutes where constituency bodies are concerned. It is further the position of the GPSC that constituency bodies can engage Board of Trustees policy to compel action on behalf of the Chancellor, if not in the letter of policy, then by precedent.

In keeping with best practices recommended by the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, the National Association of Graduate and Professional Students, and the Council of Graduate Schools, this letter represents the first attempt by GPSC to seek resolution to the above issues by bringing them to the attention of the SIU System President and Vice President for Academic Affairs. GPSC will take subsequent action to seek resolution to these issues under its authority as a recognized constituency body should this situation persist with no resolution.

GPSC therefore requests a formal, written response to this letter of complaint no later than January 23rd.

Respectfully,

Johnathan Flowers, M.A.

President,
Graduate and Professional Student Council

