

**PROPOSED RESOLUTION FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE FACULTY AT
SUNY/COLLEGE AT OLD WESTBURY**

I

RATIONALE

The Performing Arts Program of the State University of New York College at Old Westbury, with its unique focus on African-American music and dance and its unusually large number of tenured African-American faculty represents a crucial component of the College's commitment to multiculturalism and heterogeneity in its curriculum and teaching staff. The announced retrenchment of the Performing Arts faculty and staff, coupled with other recent decisions on staffing and services signifies an abandonment of the College's often stated devotion to the goals of access, diversity and human justice. The decision to retrench has not been made on the basis of financial exigency, but has been made on "programmatic" grounds and is educationally, politically and morally wrong. It threatens the College's historic mission; it undermines the integrity of our curriculum and faculty; it further depresses the quality of student life on our campus. Ironically, this retrenchment occurs just at the moment when our nation, from the White House to local school districts, is embracing and celebrating the values of diversity and inclusion which our college has pioneered.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

We, the faculty of the State University of New York College at Old Westbury, deplore the decision of our local administration and the support of SUNY's central administration in retrenching the faculty and staff of the Performing Arts Program. For the good of the community, the College at Old Westbury and SUNY itself, we call upon President Pettigrew to reverse the retrenchment decision and to move towards the reinstatement of the Performing Arts Program.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The Chair of Faculty Senate shall make this resolution public and shall also send it forward to the Chancellor, Board of Trustees, the College Council and the United University Professions.

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II

RATIONALE

On December 21, 1992, the faculty and staff of music, dance and theater were given notice of retrenchment effective December 1993. The individuals involved constituted the "Performing Arts" department. This department offered courses in support of General Education and offered a B.A. degree in "Communicative and Creative Arts," a degree title originally registered in the early 1970s when the program embraced visual arts and languages as well.

In order to understand the significance of what has happened at Old Westbury, it is necessary to review the history and circumstances surrounding the event.

There is no evidence that the retrenchment was part of a cut in the campus's budget allocation. Neither is there evidence that the lines to be vacated in 1993 will be reallocated to another area of the curriculum. There is also no evidence of intent to end performing arts in the College's curriculum. The only evidence, in fact, is that some alternative activity in performing arts is contemplated.

There is considerable evidence that President Pettigrew has long wanted a different kind of performing arts than what has been developed at Old Westbury over the last twenty years. She passed up an opportunity early in her presidency to push forward to completion the process of registration of a new degree title in performing arts as recommended by the College's Faculty. She has disparaged the performing arts faculty in private conversations and has embarrassed and threatened them in group meetings. She has denied performing arts faculty promotions and tenure. She has established an "artists-in-residence" program without consultation with the department or with any other faculty body. She has given the artists in residence access to the performing arts facilities used by the faculty and students and has been unresponsive to complaints that the environment for teaching and learning has suffered. She ignored faculty judgment and announced with some fanfare the establishment of a "Presidential Choir" (which ultimately failed for lack of student interest). She has cut budget support for music and dance and has refused to respond to queries about the I.F.R. funds in which gate receipts have been collected. For several years now, the faculty in performing arts have felt themselves to be under siege from an administration that is hostile to their objectives.

In her letters to the retrenched faculty and staff, President Pettigrew cited "curtailment of program" as the basis for her decision. She is referring to the "deactivation" of the College's degree in "Communicative and Creative Arts" which took effect in July 1992. But the "deactivation" was never, in any arena, presented or described as a first step towards retrenchment. It was never explained as having anything to do

with budget cuts or with program evaluation. The deactivation was presented and described as a technical matter having to do with the legalities of catalog language and state financial aid and was described as an interim action which would give the College time to register a new degree title more accurately descriptive of the curriculum than the one registered twenty years ago. Indeed work went forward on a curriculum proposal for a new degree title and a proposal was under review in the Faculty's Committee on Curriculum and Academic Planning at the time the performing arts faculty received retrenchment notices.

A review of the circumstances surrounding the retrenchment of the faculty and staff in music, dance and theater indicates that what has happened is, in fact, an abridgement of academic freedom: a department committed to a curriculum centered in the traditions of African-American music and dance has been retrenched because the President of the College decided unilaterally that this was not what she wanted at Old Westbury.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The Faculty of State University of New York College at Old Westbury censures President Pettigrew for violation of academic freedom.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The Chair of Faculty Senate shall make this resolution public and shall also send it forward to the Chancellor, Board of Trustees, the College Council and the United University Professions.

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III

RATIONALE

The decision to retrench five African-American faculty in the Performing Arts Program is educationally, politically and morally wrong. Performing Arts' unique focus on African-American music and dance provided by these faculty members represents a crucial component of Old Westbury's commitment to multiculturalism and heterogeneity.

The decision threatens the College's historic mission to human justice and diversity; it undermines the integrity of our curriculum and faculty; and it further depresses the quality of student life on our campus.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

We, the faculty of the State University of New York, College at Old Westbury, condemn the decision to retrench the faculty of the Performing Arts Program and vote to censure the President for this action.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The Chair of Faculty Senate shall make this resolution public and shall also send it forward to the Chancellor, Board of Trustees, the College Council and the United University Professions.

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IV

RATIONALE

There is cumulative evidence that the present Administration has bypassed faculty governance in its decision-making processes and marginalized faculty responsibility for, and input into, those arenas that properly belong to the faculty. As documented in the reports circulated for the February 5, 1993 meeting, this pattern of administrative decision-making has shown a steady escalation over the past years, despite repeated efforts of faculty to participate responsibly in the process of consultative decision-making.

When a prolonged dispute on faculty governance does exist on a campus between a president and the faculty governance body, the campus president and the leader of the local governance may jointly request the help of the SUNY Faculty Senate in resolving the dispute. This request should be made in the form of a letter of invitation to the President of the SUNY Faculty Senate to render assistance by appointing a Visitation Committee to come to campus (see attached letter).

The Visitation Committee will serve in the capacity of making an inquiry, in cooperation with the president and the governance leader, and submitting a report with suggestion and recommendations to the campus (SUNY University Senate Handbook).

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The Faculty charge the Chair of the Faculty Senate solicit the cooperation of the President in extending an invitation for a visitation from SUNY University Faculty Senate.

Dr. James Chen
President, University Faculty Senate
State University Plaza
Albany, New York

Dear Dr. Chen:

The President of the College at Old Westbury and the Chair of Faculty Senate extend a cordial invitation to the Executive Committee of the University Faculty Senate to send representation to our campus to advise and consult with us on matters of faculty governance.

The areas we should address include those relating to administrative decisions that affect the educational program of the College and the faculty role in them and the generally understood parameters of consultation in the State University of New York.

We look forward to welcoming your representatives to our campus in the near future for these discussions.

Sincerely,

L. Eudora Pettigrew,
President

B. Runi Mukherji,
Chair, Faculty Senate

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V

RATIONALE

The management style and decision-making processes of President Pettigrew's administration over the last few years have resulted in deep concern and frustration in the Faculty of the College at Old Westbury. As documented in the reports circulated prior to the Concerned Faculty Meeting of February 5, 1993, a pervasive pattern has evolved of increasing secrecy, information control, avoidance of the formal collaborative governance processes of the College, and refusal to work through normal consultative channels in making decisions.

A climate of distrust, compounded by experiences of intimidation, has been created between the President and the Faculty. Widespread belief exists that the President and her Academic Vice-President regard the Faculty with contempt, and disregard their contributions to all significant policy areas. The lack of information and consultation applies to all areas, whether those such as curriculum, specifically delegated to Faculty by the Board of Trustees, or broader concerns around budget priorities, governance, and student services.

Information exchange, consultation, and respect for faculty contributions are essential to the collegial relationship necessary for effective decision-making. In their absence the best interests of the students, and the well-being of the entire learning environment at the College, have not been, and cannot be, served.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The Faculty has no confidence in the ability of President Pettigrew to provide effective leadership or administration for the College at Old Westbury.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The Chair of Faculty Senate shall make this resolution public and shall also send it forward to the Chancellor, Board of Trustees, the College Council and the United University Professions.

State University of New York / College at Old Westbury

Old Westbury
Long Island, New York 11568
Telephone (516) 876-3000

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Faculty
FROM: RPT Committee
DATE: February 18, 1993
RE: Attached

Enclosed please find the outcomes of RPT cases from the Fall 1992 semester.

jlh

Enclosure