



To: President Karin Hilgersom
From: Faculty Tenure Committee for Dr. Kyle Simmons
RE: Support for Dr. Simmons' Tenure

January 17, 2017

Dear President Hilgersom,

We are writing to express our grave concern at your decision to recommend denial of tenure to Dr. Kyle Simmons, based on the recommendation of Dean of Liberal Arts Jill Channing.

Dr. Simmons has received absolutely outstanding evaluations from his tenure committee for three and a half years. His committee has been remarkably stable, and no one has ever resigned from it. However, one member died and had to be replaced, and one took a leave of absence and had to be replaced. The result is that five tenured faculty members from three separate departments (Humanities, History, and English) have all observed and evaluated Dr. Simmons, and every one of them has found him to be not just excellent in all respects, but truly outstanding. Your letter of denial does not mention any of the tenure committee's reports or recommendations. We find this troubling.

Moreover, Dr. Simmons has received the highest possible ratings on his annual performance evaluations for three years, including last year when Dean Channing herself signed off on an "Excellent 2" rating for him. We are concerned that a consistent record of excellence is being ignored in favor of a few complaints of questionable merit in the last four months.

We are particularly troubled by the timing of the change in tenor of his administrative evaluations, which came after he filed a sexual harassment complaint against a senior administrator. This is especially troubling because his tenure committee did not receive timely notice of any of the alleged problems, as required by the TMCC-NFA Contract.

We are also deeply concerned about the process by which TMCC Administration has denied Dr. Simmons tenure. At no time did Dean Channing contact the committee chair with any concerns, as is required by TMCC-NFA Contract 12.13. None of the legally required steps in Section 12.13 were followed by Dean Channing. Instead, Dean Channing only notified the committee of her concerns after she had already recommended denying Dr. Simmons tenure, and only after Dr. Simmons and his NFA representative pointed out the provisions of 12.13 to her.

Dean Channing notified the committee chair only at the very end of the semester, on December 11, 2017. Moreover, Dr. Channing's concerns were extremely vague, unaccompanied by any evidence, and contradicted all observations of all members of the committee. She never provided valid documentation for her concerns, and refused to meet with the tenure committee to discuss the situation.

The tenure committee planned to meet immediately when faculty returned after January 8, but unfortunately, you acted on Dean Channing's recommendation before then, on January 4.

The committee finds Dean Channing's initial concerns without merit or evidence, and strongly contradicts those concerns.

The committee also finds that the reasons you gave Dr. Simmons for denial of tenure are:

- A. Based entirely on hearsay, unsubstantiated or nonexistent complaints, personal opinions, and selective interpretations.
- B. Reversals of past annual evaluations that have been signed and approved by TMCC Administration, including Dean Channing. Therefore, they cannot be retroactively changed, as TMCC-NFA Contract 12.17 makes clear: "After an annual evaluation process has been signed off by the appropriate Dean, the faculty member and the Vice President for Academic Affairs, that faculty evaluation cycle is considered complete and final."

Dr. Simmons has the deep and widespread respect of his peers and his students. He has fulfilled all aspects of his duties at the highest level. He has some of the best student evaluations we have ever seen, and he performs service to the department and the college at a much higher level than most faculty. We stand behind our recommendations and those of our departed colleague Professor Carlo Ferguson-Macintyre. We believe that process and performance, not personalities, should control the tenure process. We therefore respectfully urge you not to accept Dean Channing's flawed arguments and instead to reverse your decision and recommend that the NSHE Regents grant Dr. Simmons tenure.

Sincerely,

Thomas Cardoza

Wade Hampton

Lindsay Wilson

Community College Professors