

AAUP

American Association of University Professors

Academic Freedom for a Free Society

VIA FACSIMILE (706-233-7374)

December 12, 2011

Dr. Donald V. Dowless
President
Shorter University
315 Shorter Avenue
Rome, Georgia 30165

Mr. Joe Frank Harris, Jr.
Chair-Elect, Board of Trustees
Shorter University
P.O. Box 848
Cartersville, Georgia 30120

Dear President Dowless and Chair-Elect Harris:

Members of the faculty at Shorter University have consulted with the American Association of University Professors as a result of a series of four statements approved by the board of trustees at its meeting on October 21, without prior discussion with the faculty, including a "Personal Lifestyle Statement," a "Statement of Faith," a "Philosophy for Christian Education," and a document entitled "Biblical Principles on the Integration of Faith and Learning." They have expressed concern that the four documents are inconsistent with principles of academic freedom, with longstanding institutional practice, and with the terms and conditions of their appointments.

The interest of the Association in this situation stems from our longstanding commitment to academic freedom and tenure, the basic tenets of which are set forth in the enclosed 1940 *Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure*. That document, a joint formulation of the AAUP and the Association of American Colleges and Universities, has received the endorsement of more than 210 scholarly and educational associations. We note that the 2011 edition of the Shorter University Faculty Handbook, updated this past May, includes a section on "Academic Freedom" (2.8.1) that is based essentially on the corresponding provisions of the 1940 *Statement*.

Among the requirements of the above-mentioned documents, we understand, is that faculty members develop an annual written plan of how they are going to "integrate the Christian faith"

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into their teaching. The faith statement requires that faculty believe that the Bible is inerrant and infallible and that all non-Christians are condemned to “everlasting torment.” All members of the faculty (and the staff), we note, are being required to sign these documents as a condition of continuing service at the university. Indeed, failure to adhere to the lifestyle statement “may result in disciplinary action . . . up to and including immediate termination.”

We wish to convey our concerns over the ramifications of these requirements for the exercise of academic freedom at Shorter University. Additional allegations we have received about adverse actions that the administration has already taken against faculty members viewed as out of conformity with the newly promulgated standards add to our concerns.

The information in our possession regarding the situation at Shorter University has come to us from faculty sources and media accounts, and we realize that you may have additional information that would contribute to our understanding of what has occurred. We would therefore welcome hearing from you.

Sincerely,



B. Robert Kreiser
Associate Secretary

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Enclosure

cc: Professor Hugh Hudson, Executive Secretary, Georgia Conference AAUP
Professor Donald R. Wagner, Member, AAUP Council, District V