

To the President, the Advisor to the President, and the Board of Trustees of Shorter University

Hear the voice of the faculty of Shorter University. Your faculty. Your university. Hear the voice that you have ignored in all that has happened since last fall. If there ever was a faculty that was marginalized in the decision-making process of its school, if there ever was a faculty whose concerns were overlooked by its school, that is the faculty of Shorter University. Your faculty. Your university.

Our goal as we began planning for this survey was to give the Shorter University faculty a voice. We created a short form of four questions, we wrote a cover letter, and we acquired the services of one of the oldest and most reputable CPA firms in Northwest Georgia. We then obtained a list of 109 full-time faculty members. The CPA firm mailed out the survey along with self-addressed, stamped envelopes during the first week of January of this year. A few days later, the CPA firm received a letter from an attorney representing Shorter. The letter warned against the use of the name "Shorter University." The CPA firm consulted its own legal counsel, resulting in a lengthy and costly delay.

Was the letter from the Shorter attorney to the CPA intentionally designed to thwart the committee's progress? Was it intentionally designed to suppress the voice of the faculty? The committee strongly believes so, but we are certain the number of those involved in this likely subterfuge is small. We also believe that the majority of you actually want to hear from your faculty. That is why we are addressing the first wave of these survey reports to you. We want to give you an opportunity to hear the voice of your faculty. And as we will explain later, we want more than that. We want also for you to respond to that voice.

But first, let's hear what your faculty said in the survey results. Despite numerous reports that the faculty feared exposure from submitting the surveys, a sizable 56% were returned. We believe we can summarize the results with four words: **Uncomfortable. Upheaval. Ineffective. Inadequate.**

UNCOMFORTABLE: Do you know that your faculty is Christian? They go to church. They worship the same God you do. They have been saved by the same Christ who saved you. Do you know this? And yet, many of them would not choose to express their faith or lifestyle choices in exactly the same way some of you would. Does that make them any less Christian? Does that make them any less capable of teaching their disciplines at Shorter University? Let us remember the wisdom of I Corinthians on the matter of trying to make everyone exactly the same in Christ. *"I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own special gift from God, one of one kind and one of another."* And another quote: *"For the body does not consist of one member but of many. [...] God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them as he chose. If all were a single organ, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body."* Clearly, the survey results indicate a large portion of your faculty, at least 75% of respondents, are **uncomfortable** with the wording of these lifestyle and faith statements.

UPHEAVAL: Many among your faculty want to leave Shorter. Only 12% of the respondents state that they plan definitely to stay at Shorter. This amounts to a mass exodus. This is your

faculty trying desperately to pull up roots, find jobs elsewhere, and find new homes for their families. It is an **upheaval** in their lives brought about by these changes at Shorter. And, of course, with upheaval comes necessarily pain and suffering. Partly, they are concerned with the signing of those statements. But we believe they are also concerned for the future of Shorter, for the type of school it might become, and for the apparent disregard the new administration has for Shorter's distinguished past and for its esteemed national and international reputation. We believe the members of the faculty are concerned ultimately with this question: How much of Shorter's current, well-earned, highly-ranked status are our new leaders willing to sacrifice?

INEFFECTIVE: Shorter has been controlled by the Georgia Baptist Convention for many years. In one way or another, every single contract signed by every single faculty member during those years has required an affirmation of the Baptist principles of the GBC. Your faculty is a Christian faculty. Your faculty would be willing to work with the Board of Trustees and with the Shorter administration in the construction of lifestyle and faith statements that would truly be "a positive affirmation of our continuing commitment to Christian higher education." But what of the current lifestyle and faith statements that Dr. Dowless presented to the faculty at the end of October? Were the faculty consulted in the construction of those statements? They were not. This disregard for faculty input is a recent phenomenon at Shorter. Did you know that just a few years ago the faculty at Shorter had an active, elected Faculty Senate that participated in administrative decisions? Did you know that the faculty at Shorter had a Representative to the Board of Trustees? This Representative was elected by the faculty and served as a consultant to the board. Neither of these entities exist at Shorter any longer. The results of the survey indicate that 89% of respondents find the current lifestyle and faith statements, for which they had no input, to be **ineffective** in affirming Shorter's commitment to Christian higher education.

INADEQUATE: Overwhelmingly, the respondents found Dr. Dowless to be **inadequate** to lead Shorter University into the future. The reasons are clear from the other survey results. Dr. Dowless, while perhaps not the chief instigator of these objectionable changes at Shorter, is certainly their chief cheerleader. And what consideration has he demonstrated for the faculty during this time of great upheaval in their lives? He knew they had significant concerns, both for themselves and for Shorter. Many appealed to him, and we have heard his responses. We are disappointed, as we think the faculty has been disappointed, by his aloofness, rigidity and lack of compassion. Our desire for brevity in this document prevents our recording the many instances we can recall of past presidents of Shorter coming to the aid of their faculty, even promoting the concept that Shorter was more than a school, that it was family. We believe Dr. Dowless has not lived up to the standard of caring set by his predecessors.

Hear the voice of your faculty. They deserve no less. You should recognize them for what they are: committed Christian educators, who have applied their expertise, knowledge, and faith to help make Shorter a great and respected university. Many younger faculty came, brought their families, bought a house and planned to stay and grow with Shorter. Now, with very little warning, they confront an unreasoning and unrelenting pressure to move on. And what of your older faculty? Are they given any special consideration for their many years of devoted service? No. They face the same unreasoning and unrelenting pressure to move on. We have heard many describe this unreasoning and unrelenting pressure as "un-Christian," and, indeed, we totally

agree. Where is the Christian love and charity that fails to respect and honor the service, the sacrifice, and the devotion of this faculty?

Hear the voice of your faculty. But also respond. You, the leaders of Shorter University, have the authority – indeed, the mandate – to help the faculty in its concerns and to restore Shorter to a path of continued greatness. As you deliberate on how best to achieve this, we urge you not to sever the ties with the past. Shorter’s heritage and traditions have been given to you as a sacred trust, and there is a great body of faculty, students, and alumni watching how you honor that trust. We pray that with God's guidance you will find a way.

____(Signed: Betty Zane
Morris)____

Retired Distinguished Professor, Shorter College, 1961 – 2007
Former Chair of Communication
Founder and Former Director of Study Abroad
Honored by the Betty Zane Morris Communication Scholarship
First Elected Faculty Representative to the Board of Trustees
Shorter College Graduate, Class of 1955
*Authorized Representative for **The Committee for Integrity** (*)*

(*) *Although the **Committee for Integrity** is not associated with Shorter University in any official way, its members are all stakeholders in Shorter’s future: former and present faculty, alumni, and staff.*