



VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

President Kirk Calhoun
The University of Texas at Tyler
3900 University Blvd.
Tyler, TX 75799

Dear President Calhoun,

The Texas Conference of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) expresses serious concern about termination of tenured faculty at The University of Texas at Tyler (UTT). The AAUP was founded in 1915 by faculty. The AAUP principles on academic freedom, tenure, and shared governance are still widely regarded by faculty, college and university administrations, and governing boards alike as the “gold standards” of higher education. [1-2] These principles were jointly formulated with organizations representing college and university presidents, and the Association of Governing Boards.

Like the National AAUP, the Texas AAUP Conference is highly concerned about College of Arts and Sciences Dean Neil Gray’s 15-day notice of termination of employment for tenured Associate Professor Mickie Mwanzia Koster dated Monday, October 16, 2023. Dean Gray’s actions are in clear violation of policies and procedures of The University of Texas at Tyler and The University of Texas System as well as long-established standards of due process afforded tenured faculty. Dr. Mickie Mwanzia Koster, a tenured associate professor and historian of Africa and the African Diaspora, has been on UTT’s faculty since 2011.

UT Regents’ Rule 31008 Termination of a Faculty Member [3] states: “The faculty member who is the subject of the allegations **shall be given an opportunity to be interviewed and shall have the right to present a grievance, in person or through a representative, to the chief academic officer** on an issue or subject related to the allegations under review.” As explained to us by Dr. Koster, this did not happen nor: “If the president determines that the allegations are supported by evidence that justifies the initiation of termination procedures, **the president will meet with the faculty member, explain the allegations and supporting evidence, and give the faculty member a reasonable amount of time, as determined by the president, to respond either orally or in writing.**” Summary dismissal requires “**providing the faculty member with appropriate due process required by state law, including providing the faculty member with written notice of the allegations against the faculty member together with an explanation of the evidence supporting dismissal and an opportunity for the faculty member to respond to the allegations in a hearing with a designated administrator.**” As we understand it, this process was entirely bypassed in the current situation, in violation of the Regents’ Rule.

In an email on October 18, 2023, available below, Prof. Koster requested a hearing by her peers and a meeting with the President. We are not aware she has been afforded these.

Dean Gray's letter does not mention Dr. Koster has tenure or what process was used in dismissing her as a tenured faculty member. Per Section 6 of UT Regents' Rule 31008, a tenured faculty member can only be dismissed by the UT Board of Regents.

Like National AAUP, Texas AAUP is very concerned about the absence of a hearing by her faculty peers during the process prior to the issuance of the notice of termination of employment of tenured Associate Professor Mickie Mwanzia Koster. This disregards the due process afforded a faculty member in the AAUP statement on shared governance [2] which has been adopted by UT System through its membership in the Association of Governing Boards, and in the AAUP procedural standards for faculty dismissal [4].

The Texas AAUP Conference is deeply concerned by UTT's actions and joins the National AAUP in requesting that Dr. Koster's termination be withdrawn immediately. She deserves, and per Regents' Rules is entitled to, the right to due process.

In closing, we acknowledge that our understanding of this matter comes primarily from Dr. Koster, and thus welcome your response.

Please see the attached documents for further information.

Sincerely,



Brian L. Evans, PhD | aaup.texas@gmail.com | 512-516-5991

Interim President, Texas Conference of AAUP

Cc: UT Tyler – Provost Amir Mirmiran, Dean Neil Gray, Faculty Senate President Amentahru Wahlrab, Dept. Chair Colin Snider, and Dr. Mickie Mwanzia Koster
Texas AAUP Academic Freedom Committee – Dr. Ann McGlashan and Dr. Lynn Tatum
AAUP Dept. of Academic Freedom, Tenure & Governance – Dr. Anita Levy and Dr. Greg Scholtz

References

- [1] [1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom & Tenure](#), jointly formulated by the [American Association of Colleges & Universities](#) representing college and university administrations and American Association of University Professors representing faculty members.
- [2] [1966 Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities](#), jointly formulated by AAUP representing faculty, the [American Council on Education](#) representing college and university administrations, and [Association of Governing Boards of Universities & Colleges](#) representing Boards of Regents, Boards of Trustees, and other governing boards.
- [3] [UT Regents' Rule 31008 Termination of a Faculty Member](#), last amended Oct. 11, 2023.
- [4] [1958 AAUP Statement on Procedural Standards in Faculty Dismissal Proceedings](#)