

From: Tom Wilde <deleted>
Date: July 11, 2005 7:11:22 PM PDT
To: benmar@uclink4.berkeley.edu
Subject: UCLA

Dear Dr. Ben Bagdikian,

Several months back, I sent a letter to your address at UC Berkeley concerning my dismissal from UCLA's Graduate School of Education and Information Studies (GSE&IS). I'm writing again in an effort to gather faculty support for two UCLA professors: Dr. Robert Brenner, in UCLA's History Department, and Dr. Val Rust, in UCLA's GSE&IS (Dr. Rust was my division head in the GSE&IS who co- wrote a letter with my advisor requesting my reinstatement and a review of the termination decision). These two professors have met and carefully examined my termination file, and they agree that this dismissal decision needs to be reversed and that I need to be reinstated in my doctoral program.

However, it appears to me that they are now exhibiting more than a bit of "shyness" when it comes to taking steps (toward UCLA administrators) to have the dismissal decision reversed. In other words, the matter has 'stalled.'

I've been trying to solicit support for them at UCLA, but this has proven to be somewhat difficult; it appears that those I've contacted want to remain silent, though clearly at the expense of academic and ethical principles.

I would greatly appreciate your letting me know if you'd be able to support these two UCLA professors, so that they may take steps toward UCLA administrators to make the case for my reinstatement. Or, perhaps you can contact them directly in order to lend them whatever backing you can offer in this case.

Dr. Robert Brenner: rbrenner@ucla.edu
Dr. Val Rust: vrust@cox.net

Of course, I'd be quite happy to provide you with the facts of my termination and answer any questions you may have concerning this matter.

I thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely, Tom Wilde
[address deleted]
[phone # deleted]
[email deleted]

From: "Ben H. Bagdikian" <benmar@uclink4.berkeley.edu>
Date: July 11, 2005 10:16:38 PM PDT
To: Tom Wilde <deleted>
Subject: Re: UCLA

Dear Tom Wilde,

I cannot consider any intervention unless you tell me -- briefly and candidly-- why you were dismissed and what the Administration gave as its reason for the dismissal.

Sincerely,
Ben Bagdikian

From: Tom Wilde <deleted>
Date: July 12, 2005 10:37:20 PM PDT
To: Ben H. Bagdikian <benmar@uclink4.berkeley.edu>
Subject: Re: UCLA

Dear Dr. Ben Bagdikian,

Thank you for your prompt response. As it seems to me that you'd want to know a bit more than only why I was dismissed (i.e., "what the Administration gave as its reason for the dismissal"), I'll also offer a few pertinent facts that I hope will help you consider any intervention while not falling too far beyond the bounds of brevity and candor.

I was dismissed from UCLA's Graduate School of Education and Information Studies "because of [my] low grade point average." (i.e., below the 3.0 minimum GPA requirement for graduate studies in the Education Department.)

Graduate Division written policy states that there is no review of a dismissal decision based on an insufficient GPA (below 3.0).

Following my dismissal, I met with my Advisor to discuss the fact that two grades for work that I'd long since turned in were not on my Academic Record at the time the dismissal decision was made. (My advisor had not been included in the dismissal decision and had not known of my dismissal until this meeting.)

Shortly thereafter, my Advisor and Division Head jointly wrote a letter to the

Education Department recommending my reinstatement and a review of the dismissal decision. They wrote in part:

"More importantly, neither of us had been asked for any background information on Mr. Wilde's case. Nor apparently was much effort taken to verify the apparent facts of Mr. Wilde's academic record. Incompletes that had been cleared were listed as Fs and no enquiries about their real status or about the student's general progress were made."

While my Advisor and I were attempting to point out to the Administration that the termination decision was based on an inaccurate Academic Record in order to have the dismissal decision reviewed, the Administration was rejecting our requests by citing its written policy of no review of a dismissal decision based on an insufficient GPA. (There's a rather obvious bit of catch-22 at work here, but this evidently didn't appear as a problem to the Administration.)

After my advisor's failed written attempts to have me reinstated and the dismissal decision reviewed, he wrote in an e-mail to me:

"I will argue that it [the dismissal procedure] indicates that you have been made to pay with your academic career for department error (...), professor and university disorganisation (...) [and] carelessness by whoever (...) issues the dismissal notice (for their failure to verify the situation)."

A few months later, without having made his argument, my advisor told me that there was nothing further he could do and he left the matter at that.

My former advisor, an Emeritus Professor, has since retired, which is why I have been seeking out help from other UC faculty members. As I think it gets at the gist of my dispute of my dismissal with the brevity and candor you asked for, I'll close here with a paragraph taken from one of my messages to another UCLA faculty member requesting his help:

"No one has ever disputed the fact that I had submitted work to make up two incompletes well before my termination, but that the grades for this work were not on my Academic Record at the time the decision was made to terminate my academic career for an insufficient GPA. And no one has ever disputed the fact that when these grades did show up on my Academic Record, they brought my GPA above 3.0. Indeed, no one has ever explained how a student terminated for a GPA below 3.0 can have a GPA *above* 3.0 on his Academic Record *at a time when this student's advisor is asking for the student's reinstatement and a review of the termination decision.*"

I hope the above not only tells you why I was dismissed (the Administration's

reason for my dismissal), but also allows you to get a good idea of why I am requesting your help.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Tom Wilde

[phone # deleted]
[email address deleted]

From: "Ben H. Bagdikian" <benmar@uclink4.berkeley.edu>
Date: July 13, 2005 8:33:35 AM PDT
To: Tom Wilde <deleted>
Subject: Re: UCLA

Dear Tome Wilde,

Thanks for the details of your case. It is legendary that the role of "incompletes" that affect GPA [has] become endless. I hope you will understand that while I see the possibility of error in administration, my experience has been that the intervention of outsiders is seldom effective. In addition, I have a heavy schedule in coming months of travel and work, and my intervention in your case would seriously interfere with that, even in the doubtful case that my intervention from afar had any effect at all. I think your involving persons and actions in the UCLA community is the most effective action you can take. I wish you the best of luck,

Ben Bagdikian

From: Tom Wilde <deleted>
Date: July 16, 2005 8:55:18 AM PDT
To: Ben H. Bagdikian <benmar@uclink4.berkeley.edu>
Subject: Re: UCLA

Dear Dr. Ben Bagdikian,

Thank you for your reply.

Decorum would have it that I'd accept the thinking in your decision and leave the matter at that; reason would not. That "intervention of outsiders is seldom effective" is of course not a reason for non-intervention in this matter, where academic and ethical principles are the central issues; certainly these principles are precisely what's most effectively used to intervene. And I think your positioning yourself as an 'outsider' to UCLA is scarcely justifiable, given that the University of California operates as a support system when it comes to its administration; UC faculty would do well always to follow their lead, for all the same reasons.

Of course, had I known that the manner in which I was dismissed could indeed be seen as "legendary" among UC faculty, I would not have applied to the UC in the first place, as my knowing this 'legend' would have made it clear that academic and ethical principles are in fact suspended by administrators, and faculty members would then chalk my dismissal up to the perpetuation of this "endless" legend.

In fact, I don't think my dismissal is part of this 'legend' as you put it, despite my taking incompletes, as none of the (few) faculty members who have carefully examined the facts has characterized it as you have; rather, they've stated that the Administration's dismissal is "rotten" and "a wrong to right." These are the sorts of statements that are made when the matter involves a clear violation of academic and ethical principles.

Indeed, two UCLA faculty members who see my dismissal as "a wrong to right" attempted to move on their own to bring me back into the Education Department, but were halted by Administrators. Now, it appears to me that these faculty members have backed away from righting this wrong because they are afraid of having to confront these Administrators.

Working as typical (isolated) faculty members, these professors understandably fear this confrontation. My contacting you is an effort to gather support for them, as it seems to me that UC faculty members must move to support one another most vigorously when power is trumping academic and ethical principles. (That faculty members often allow power to violate these principles has put me to looking further than the UCLA community.)

I would like to ask that you reconsider your decision to do nothing in this case. At least a few UCLA faculty members are in need of your encouragement, if not your support. Or perhaps you could pass along the names of any UC faculty members you know who may be willing to take a close look at this situation.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Tom Wilde

From: "Ben H. Bagdikian" <benmar@uclink4.berkeley.edu>
Date: July 16, 2005 9:54:29 AM PDT
To: Tom Wilde <deleted>
Subject: Re: UCLA

Dear Mr. Wilde,

I will not get involved in your case. I am 300 miles from your faculty, you take my involvement for granted and are full of recriminations if I do not leap to your defense. I do not leap to your defense because that would require accumulation from you and the university of full details of the dismissal. I do not have the time for that nor do I wish to take the requisite time because my professional and family matters are of a far higher priority.

Sincerely,
Ben Bagdikian

(The above July 16, 2005, email is the last one I received from Ben Bagdikian.)

From: Tom Wilde <deleted>

Date: July 16, 2005 12:08:39 PM PDT

To: Ben H. Bagdikian <benmar@uclink4.berkeley.edu>

Subject: Re: UCLA

Dear Dr. Ben Bagdikian,

I thank you for your reply and would like to extend my sincere regards and respect to you. I deeply regret that my approach has offended you and otherwise made you think that I was in any way attempting to coerce you to leap to my defense.

I do think the facts in my dismissal allow UC faculty not necessarily to leap, but to come to the defense of academic and ethical principles.

My best wishes to you and your family,
Tom Wilde