

March 15, 2017

Colleagues,

It was stated during our unit's March 7 meeting that votes of no confidence do not effect change. The facts say otherwise. Out of 29 votes of no confidence recorded by faculty bodies in 2015 and 2016, 17 presidents resigned or announced their retirement. That means 59% of the presidents who faced no-confidence votes left office (or announced their intent to leave office) almost immediately.

These 17 presidents were hired by boards of trustees, as was our president, so it is false to say that trustees universally back presidents. The reasons many faculty bodies gave for these votes are similar to the issues we face at Rider, including concerns about shared governance, cuts to faculty and programs, and differences with the faculty over strategic visions for their institution. Dr. Sean McKinnis maintains a database of faculty votes of no confidence, and the reasons for those votes, at <http://www.seanmckinniss.org/no-confidence-vote-database/>

As for the 12 cases in which no-confidence votes failed to remove presidents, I see no evidence of retaliation from the trustees or presidents – in fact, at one institution (Loyola University) the faculty was awarded a 2-percent raise. The trustees of Cape Cod Community College responded to a no-confidence vote from roughly 60% of faculty and staff by pushing the president to foster better “communications, collegiality, and administrative processes” and promising the board would seek regular updates from the president on his progress in these areas. Cape Cod's president responded, “I'm doubling down and recommitted to working this out.” I see no evidence of a school irreparably damaged by negative press coverage after a no-confidence vote, whether or not it removed a president.

President Dell'omo has created an atmosphere of fear, justifying his demands on the faculty by making us fear for our jobs and the very life of this university. But we've seen projections that counter his doomsday accounting, and we must not fear the reaction to a vote of no confidence.

Much time in our meeting was spent attempting to mind-read our board of trustees, when we cannot guess the extent of our trustees' satisfaction with our president, or their dedication, as alumni, to an institution built in large part by our long-serving faculty, or how they might react to a vote of no confidence from that faculty. We must not forget that some of our trustees are Westminster Choir College alumni, and may well feel uncertain about a president who has so shaken that campus.

The reality is that a faculty's vote of no confidence makes a statement to the board of trustees, who then could respond in a few different ways:

- a) Reject our vote and support the president fully.
- b) Support the president, but strongly encourage him to repair the relationship with the faculty by working to find compromise
- c) Censure the president and give him a deadline to make specific improvements.

d) Support our vote and ask for the president's resignation.

As I said in my brief remarks when I introduced this motion, I don't make this motion lightly, and I do not intend it to be a negotiating tactic. I make this motion because our president has *refused* to negotiate; we've made concessions and offered a great deal more of them, while he has not budged in the demands he makes of us. His August 31 deadline is our deadline to capitulate to his demands. We are facing a contract that will change the very nature of Rider as an institution, and I believe, as do our unit's president and chief grievance officer, that a no-confidence vote from the unit is our strongest statement.

Vote your conscience, but do not be misinformed.

Dr. Mickey Hess,  
Professor of English

My figures come from the following list of 29 votes of no confidence at universities during 2015 and 2016:

1. Akron, 2016, president resigned
2. City colleges of Chicago, 2016, president resigned
3. Loyola, 2016, president remained but faculty got a 2% raise
4. Wisconsin, 2016, president remained
5. Jackson State Community College, 2016 -- president was moved "to expedite his planned retirement."
6. LIU Brooklyn, 2016, president remained
7. Cape Cod, 2016, president remained
8. Hartwick, 2016, president remained
9. College of Saint Rose, 2016, president remained
10. Davis and Elkins, 2016, president resigned
11. University of Louisville, 2016, president resigned
12. Grambling, 2016, president resigned
13. Kapiolani, 2016, president resigned
14. Green River, 2015, president resigned
15. West Liberty, 2015, president resigned
16. Sweet Briar, 2015, president resigned
17. University of South Carolina, 2015, president resigned
18. Yeshiva, 2015, president remained
19. University of Missouri, 2015, president resigned
20. Connecticut State, 2015, president resigned
21. Northwest Nazarene University, 2015, president resigned
22. San Bernardino Community College, 2015, president remained
23. Bermuda College, 2015, president remained
24. Phoenix College (in Arizona – not the online University of Phoenix), 2015, president retired

25. University of Alabama Birmingham, 2015, president remained
26. Ithaca College, 2015, president announced his retirement
27. Chico State, 2015, president announced his retirement
28. Hocking College, 2015, president remained
29. Simpson College, 2015, president remained