

August 15, 2016

Representative Tim Miller  
415 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
E-Mail: [rep.tim.miller@house.mn](mailto:rep.tim.miller@house.mn)

Dear Representative Miller:

Thank you for your recent inquiry regarding the Program for Human Rights and Health (“the Program”) in the School of Public Health. As the Dean of the School of Public Health, I am responding on behalf of President Kaler.

I understand that one of our SPH faculty and perhaps others have been stating to some that this decision was made for “political” reasons. Let me assure you at the outset that this is wrong. I made the decision solely for financial reasons as I describe below. Neither I nor the University would make a decision such as this due to someone’s view point or engagement with the public policy process. Everyone involved remains free to express his or her views and to seek funding to continue the Program’s work.

Let me provide background and context for this decision.

The program consists of one employee, Dr. Kirk Allison, who is a Professional and Administrative (P&A) employee on an annually renewable appointment. About 2005, SPH Professor Bryan Dowd asked me to house Dr. Allison and his activities in the SPH Dean’s Office, moving out of the Law School. I agreed to do so with the understanding that it be at no cost to the School.

Recently, however the School of Public Health has experienced budgetary challenges. As Dean, I am responsible for addressing them. I have been seeking cost savings throughout the School. Programs and centers are not immune from examination. Because the School is also streamlining administration support services, governance and alignment of resources with academic priorities, this was an appropriate time to review. In looking at the Program’s finances, the cost of housing Dr. Allison and his activities required a School subsidy of about \$190,000 total from 2007-2016. His teaching generated \$735,000. Total costs of housing the Program during the same period totaled \$925,000, hence the gap (revenue minus expenses). Dr. Allison does not receive any extramural research funding. He has received a small amount of philanthropic funding.

In late January, 2016, I met with Dr. Allison and informed him of my intent to non-renew his annual appointment immediately, as a result of our budgetary challenges. At that time, I suggested that he seek a home in an SPH division or within another University college or school. I also said I would delay my decision until June to further assess our financial situation.

Since then, no other unit has expressed interest to me in housing the Program, thus I notified Dr. Allison in June that I would not be renewing his annual P&A appointment. He will continue teaching his scheduled courses throughout the fall semester. Shortly thereafter, Professor Bryan Dowd met with me and my Senior Associate Dean to express his displeasure with the decision.

I want to reiterate that this was my decision alone, driven by the financial and resource alignment challenges within the School of Public Health that I have described. In discussing it *post facto* with the Provost, we agree that it was entirely within my scope of authority to do so. No other University officer has played a role in this decision.

The co-chairs of the Program, Professor Dowd and Dr. Steven Calvin remain affiliated with the University. Professor Dowd is a tenured full professor in our Division of Health Policy and Management and remains on the University's faculty. Dr. Calvin is an affiliate faculty member in the Medical School and a physician at Allina Health. As always, they are free to seek funding and support to continue the type of work Dr. Allison has performed with the Program. They are free to locate another collegiate home for Dr. Allison and the Program within the University or elsewhere. I have assured Dr. Allison that his intellectual property rights to course materials such as syllabi are fully protected. I have also offered assurance that he can keep and transfer his website and its associated materials. His time here has been productive and I am grateful for his contributions. None of his rights or anyone else's have been violated.

I understand that some are disappointed that Dr. Allison and his activities will no longer be housed here. Fortunately, the University has many rich resources and significant faculty expertise focused on human rights issues. Currently, the Humphrey School of Public Affairs, the Law School, the College of Liberal Arts and the School of Public Health are engaged in discussions about a more integrated cross-collegiate approach to this very important arena.

I would be happy to meet with you on this matter. Please let me know if I can address additional concerns.

Sincerely,



John R. Finnegan Jr., PhD  
Professor and Dean

cc: Eric Kaler, President (E-Mail: upres@umn.edu)  
Karen Hanson, Executive Vice President and Provost (E-Mail: karhan@umn.edu)