

March 3, 2016

Augusta University Faculty Grievance Hearing Panel

In care of:

Todd Hoffman, Ph.D.

Grievance Hearing Officer

Associate Professor

Department of English and Foreign Languages

1120 15th Street, AH E237

Augusta, Georgia 30912

RE: Hegde Grievance Response

Dear Dr. Hoffman, Dr. Bolgla, Dr. Braxton, Dr. Crawford, Dr. Deaner, and Dr. El-Marakby,

Thank you for your service as Grievance Hearing Officer (Hoffman) and as grievance panel members. In accordance with the Faculty Grievance Policy which allows respondents to respond in writing, this letter serves as my response to the grievance filed by Dr. Jay Hegde.

As you consider this matter, would like to note for the record that I have never met Dr. Hegde in person. I don't know who he is and while he has been described to me, I have never seen him that I know of to recognize him. My only interactions with him have been through email.

Dr. Hegde has alleged in his grievance statement that Mr. Chris Melcher and I set up three "additional investigations. One by Mr. Glenn Powell..., one by the IACUC, and one by Ms. Norton and Mr. Melcher." (See page 27, section B.14.10 of Dr. Hegde's grievance statement)

None of these allegations are true. Mr. Melcher and I did not set up any investigations. Upon receipt of Dr. Hegde's initial email on April 3, 2015, we met with individuals who had been dealing with Dr. Hegde's various concerns at various times between April and early July. We learned from them what their activities had been and the status of their work in response to him. It appeared to us based on those meetings that he had four general concerns. Therefore, we responded on each of those concerns. It was clear from information provided that several individuals were involved at different levels – some were responding to concerns, some were attempting to advise him on what he needed to do to resume his research, some were attempting to care for the monkey. From what I observed, all were interested in helping Dr. Hegde but were also frustrated at his unwillingness to help himself.

I will address each allegation specifically. First, Mr. Glenn Powell was not directed by Mr. Melcher or me to conduct an investigation. Mr. Powell had received a complaint that had been filed by Dr. Hegde with the Georgia Commission on Equal Opportunity (GCEO). When notices of complaints are received by the University, it is Mr. Powell's job to gather the necessary information to respond to the specific questions provided by the GCEO. To my knowledge, Mr. Powell followed the standard protocol he always follows and gathered the necessary

information and submitted a response. He did not conduct his own investigation. Also, it is important to note that at the time Mr. Powell received notice of the complaint from GCEO, he did not notify me of the receipt and so I did not even know about the matter. As a matter of practice, Mr. Powell does not necessarily let me know if notice is received from the GCEO unless it's an employment related matter and he requires copies of documentation held by Human Resources. Thus, he did not notify me that he'd received notice of this complaint nor did he consult with me as he gathered the necessary information required to respond. As I previously stated, Mr. Powell gathered the necessary information in response to this request and he provided it as we are required to do. Again, there was no investigation and we did not direct that there be an investigation. Enclosed for you is a statement from Mr. Powell describing his process and confirming that neither Chris Melcher nor I directed that he conduct an investigation (See Exhibit A). I believe this to be a misunderstanding on the part of Dr. Hegde as to how these complaints are handled.

With regard to the allegation that Mr. Melcher and I set up an investigation by the IACUC, this too is inaccurate and a false allegation. Mr. Melcher and I did not direct that the IACUC conduct an investigation. Rather Dr. Hegde already had an ongoing complaint with the IACUC and we simply identified that they were in the process of responding to his concerns. It is my understanding the statements that Drs. Brands and Stepp are submitting will confirm this. Also, attached is a statement from Dr. Stepp, who chaired the IACUC until June 30, 2015, independently confirming this (See Exhibit B). Like the allegation related to Mr. Powell, I believe this to be a misunderstanding on the part of Dr. Hegde as to how these complaints are handled.

While Dr. Hegde did not allege that we directed Jim Rush to conduct an investigation, I would also offer that Chris Melcher and I learned that Jim Rush was conducting an investigation at Dr. Hegde's request. According to Mr. Rush, that investigation was completed in accordance with Mr. Rush's office protocol and found no wrongdoing.

Finally, Mr. Melcher and I did not conduct our own investigation. We met with those who had information about his concerns and we responded to him with the information we had gathered. During the process of learning about what had transpired, we were advised that various parties had responded to him on multiple occasions through the official processes for those concerns. There was nothing for Chris Melcher or me to investigate as other offices were already appropriately addressing Dr. Hegde's various concerns. I only confirmed that the offices with responsibility for addressing his other concerns had either done so or were in the process of finalizing their work. I responded to him with information on the status of his various concerns only. That is the extent of my involvement. I still have no understanding of what his concerns are with me.

Also, I am unaware of any employment related action that has adversely affected Dr. Hegde and I certainly have not taken any employment action and I do not have the authority to do so. In fact, my understanding is that Dr. Hegde has not suffered any negative employment actions, but rather he received a salary increase of 4% effective last July 1, 2015 for his performance.

(See Exhibits C & D which are contracts for Dr. Hegde for FY 2015 and FY 2016 that I obtained under the Georgia Open Records Act.) For context, the merit pool for increases effective July 1, 2015, was 1% per the University Budget Office. Therefore, I am not aware of any adverse employment action that has affected Dr. Hegde.

In closing, I would like to reiterate that neither Chris Melcher nor I directed that any investigations be set up nor did we conduct an investigation. I have never been involved in anything that could be construed as a cover-up and have no knowledge of any efforts to cover anything up. I literally have no understanding of why Dr. Hegde believes I have somehow wronged him. I'm very sorry that he lost one of his monkeys but I had nothing to do with that then nor have I had anything to do with that since. I also am sorry that he could not agree to follow the feeding protocol approved by the IACUC as I understand was communicated to him, but I also had nothing to do with that then and do not have anything to do with it now.

Thank you again for your service on this important panel and for your commitment to faculty governance. I am also supportive of faculty governance and have always been and remain committed to fairness for all.

Sincerely,



Susan A. Norton, M.S., SPHR
Vice President, Human Resources
Augusta University

Enclosures: Exhibit A – Glenn Powell Statement
Exhibit B – David Stepp Statement
Exhibit C – 2015 Faculty Contract for Dr. Hegde
Exhibit D – 2016 Faculty Contract for Dr. Hegde