

AAUP

American Association of University Professors

Academic Freedom for a Free Society

November 30, 2011

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL AND FACSIMILE

Dr. Sidney A. McPhee
President
Middle Tennessee State University
1301 East Main Street
Murfreesboro, Tennessee 37132-0001

Dear President McPhee:

Our Association has just been informed of the November 14 letter from Provost Brad Bartel to faculty members serving on full-time, tenure-ineligible appointments. The provost notified these faculty members that the administration had altered the terms and conditions of their appointments to demote them in rank from instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, or full professor to lecturer or senior lecturer. Included with the letter were two copies of an amendment to their contracts to be signed and return by today. Failure to do so would result in the termination of their appointments effective at the end of the fall semester. "This signed amendment," the provost wrote, "will be required for employment in Spring semester 2012."

Altering the terms and conditions of a faculty member's appointment before its expiration while at the same time threatening to dismiss a professor who refuses to agree to the alteration is truly reprehensible. It contravenes basic tenets of academic freedom and tenure set forth in the 1940 *Statement of Principles of Academic Freedom and Tenure*, a joint formulation of the AAUP and the Association of American Colleges and Universities, and the procedural standards set forth in the derivative *Recommended Institutional Regulations on Academic Freedom and Tenure* (both documents are enclosed). It is the AAUP's longstanding position that "with the exception of special appointments clearly limited to a brief association with the institution . . . all full-time faculty appointments are of two kinds: (1) probationary appointments; (2) appointments with continuous tenure" (Regulation 1b of the *Recommended Institutional Regulations*). Accordingly, no full-time faculty member, regardless of his or her title, should be subject to summary dismissal for refusing to agree to demotion in rank.

We are advising faculty members who have been compelled to sign these amendments to indicate that they have done so under protest and without waiving their rights.

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We urge in strongest terms that no adverse action be taken against the recipients of the November 14 letter.

If you wish to discuss this matter with us, we would welcome hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gregory F. Scholtz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Gregory F. Scholtz
Associate Secretary and Director
Department of Academic Freedom, Tenure, and Governance

Enclosures (by electronic mail)

cc: Dr. Paula Myrick Short, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Tennessee Board of Regents
Dr. Brad Bartel, MTSU Provost
Professor Alfred Lutz, President, MTSU AAUP
Professor H. Coleman McGinnis, President, Tennessee AAUP