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March 10, 2021

William P. Donnelly, Chair of the Board of Directors ([boardchair@jcu.edu](mailto:boardchair@jcu.edu))

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Steven Herbert, Provost ([provost@jcu.edu](mailto:provost@jcu.edu))

John Carroll University  
1 John Carroll Boulevard  
University Heights, Ohio 44118

Dear Chair Donnelly, President Johnson, and Provost Herbert:

We write as chair of the board of officers and executive director of the American Philosophical Association, the largest scholarly society of philosophers in North America, representing more than 8,000 members. We urge you and all involved in making vital decisions about the future of John Carroll University to reconsider and reverse your recent decision to revise JCU's governing documents in ways that significantly undermine tenure protections.

Tenure protections, as articulated in the AAUP's 1940 *Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure*, are essential to the flourishing of universities and scholars alike. The AAUP *Principles* allow for institutional leaders to make regrettable but necessary cuts in cases of financial exigency, consistent with shared governance practices. Nonetheless, over the strong objections of faculty, students, and alumni, JCU's leadership has proposed a new "budget hardship" status that is much less stringent than financial exigency and that confers on JCU's leaders broad unilateral powers to eliminate faculty positions. This change directly undermines tenure and academic freedom for JCU's faculty, to the detriment of all in your campus community.

JCU's success depends on the freedom to explore new ideas and try new pedagogies. Without strong tenure protections, JCU faculty will be limited in what they research and how they teach, if only through the chilling effect of the new policy. Students will suffer as a result, as will the reputation and brand of the university as a place for innovation. That will make JCU a less attractive place to work, making it harder to retain and attract excellent faculty. In short, by circumventing the gold standard of tenure and academic freedom set forth by the AAUP, John Carroll University will only reduce its stature and potentially worsen current financial pressures.

We know that the financial impacts of the coronavirus pandemic are significant, and we understand that administrators are facing serious pressures to reckon with and mitigate those impacts. But taking steps to weaken tenure protections is ill-advised and counterproductive. Instead, this is a time to hold strong to the foundations of the American university education and, in particular, the

principles of Jesuit pedagogy that make John Carroll University the high-quality institution it is widely known to be.

In its statements of core values, John Carroll University describes itself as “an environment of inquiry which embraces Jesuit Catholic education as a search for truth where faith and reason complement each other in learning.” The AAUP 1940 *Statement* echoes this commitment, stating “The common good depends upon the free search for truth and its free exposition.”

We strongly urge you and all those involved in vital decision making for John Carroll University to reconsider and reverse the decision to revise JCU policies and procedures in ways that undermine tenure protections and run counter to AAUP standards. We urge you to resume working in concert with JCU faculty under the principles of shared governance, abiding by legitimate tenure standards, for the good of your students, your faculty, and John Carroll University’s future.

Most sincerely,



Dominic McIver Lopes, Chair, Board of Officers



Amy E. Ferrer, Executive Director

cc: Earl Spurgin, Professor & Interim Chair, Philosophy Department ([espurgin@jcu.edu](mailto:espurgin@jcu.edu))

Simon Fitzpatrick, Associate Professor of Philosophy, JCU AAUP Chapter President ([sfitzpatrick@jcu.edu](mailto:sfitzpatrick@jcu.edu))