

MEMORANDUM

To: The Board of Directors, John Carroll University

From: Susan Orpett Long, Professor Emerita, John Carroll University

Re: Faculty tenure decision

Date: March 17, 2021

As an emerita professor who taught at John Carroll for 31 years, winner of a Distinguished Faculty award, founder or co-founder of two minors, winner of a professional association's new book prize, and committed John Carroll University employee, I write to strongly urge you to reconsider your decision to allow termination of any faculty member for reasons of budgetary hardship. My main reasons are as follows:

1. The decision is a violation of the common and professional understandings of tenure.

Tenure is primarily a guarantee of academic freedom, that is, to teach and research in one's subject in the way that the faculty member believes best advances knowledge in the field and enhances students' understanding and skills in critical analysis. The system that the Board advocates and has now approved leaves any faculty vulnerable to termination for any reason in the name of cost-savings. You may not intend to use the new rule to quiet dissent or shut down views unsupported by the Roman Catholic Church, yet your decision opens the door to future Boards and administrators to do so. To put it differently, John Carroll will no longer be operating as a university.

In my 31 years of teaching at John Carroll, as an anthropologist and a non-Christian, I never felt that my job would be endangered because I taught anthropology in the best way I could. Although I was sometimes made to feel like an outsider due to my discipline or my religious background, I never felt that my employment was at risk because of it. Rather, I used those differences to broaden the students' worlds, and through understanding various cultures and life ways, create greater ability to function in our diverse world. I would also note that I am old enough to remember when John Carroll did not have significant financial concerns and can appreciate that times are harder. But the administration has claimed budgetary hardship for at least 20 years, meaning that in your decision, any of my colleagues could have lost their jobs for any reason. If I were aware of the system you have approved, I would not take a position at JCU, and I doubt that young scholars would come, or stay, if they had a choice.

2. For the reasons stated above, the decision to effectively eliminate tenure will directly affect the quality and nature of the education that John Carroll's vision and mission statements express. Many faculty members share in your concerns for the financial stability of

the university. It does not make sense to attack or undermine those who would be a source of support. Academic employees who feel threatened, who are looking over their shoulder to see if someone is going to report them, or who are self-censoring cannot convey the perspectives of the variety of disciplines across the JCU curriculum, nor does it contribute to students' understandings of the diversity of people with whom they will interact over the course of their lifetimes. If we are to prepare students to be proficient national and world citizens and "men and women for others," a silenced faculty and the terminating of their teachers due to a vague concern about budgetary hardship for a couple of years is an unwise and ineffective approach. The lack of commitment to employees is also a poor example for the students of moral leadership.

3. I am also extremely concerned for the meaning of your decision for John Carroll's reputation in the years ahead, affecting recruiting and fundraising. The changing nature of a JCU education that I foresee based on the above will lead to a lower assessment of John Carroll by those who value a richer educational experience, that is, more than just occupational training. Lower faculty morale can be sensed, and certainly faculty will be less enthusiastic about recruiting students to a place where they are not valued. Over my years at John Carroll, I worked with Admissions and my department and programs to recruit, and in my own social networks, have encouraged high school students and their parents to consider what JCU had to offer. I could recommend it with enthusiasm, primarily for the enthusiasm and quality of the faculty, as well as the small class sizes and personal attention to students in all aspects of university life. Under the new system you have approved, I would have to qualify my recommendation.

Moreover, I am concerned that this action will lead to lower rankings and censure by a variety of academic organizations. We have already seen negative coverage of your decision by *Inside Higher Education*. I envision upcoming censure by not only the AAUP, but by a variety of professional academic associations. For example, if censured, will they run job announcements for JCU positions? Perhaps most importantly, we need to ask how this will affect accreditation of the university. During the most recent review, there were already concerns about faculty governance that needed to be addressed (along with other problems) before a re-visit and eventual accreditation. Will they find faculty who all work as at-will employees without a meaningful tenure system to meet the standards of a high quality university? These elements of reputation are not only a concern for Admissions and hiring, but also of the Development Division. If fundraising is affected by a declining reputation, the university will have entered a vicious circle of less money leading to lowered quality, leading back around to lowered contributions. I sincerely hope that this scenario does not play out, but the Board must be vigilant that its decisions do not result in a less qualified faculty, less vigorous education, and declining reputation. Moreover, at least in the short-run, any legal actions that result from this violation of faculty contracts will undoubtedly take away money better spent on providing the best educational opportunities for students.

I hope that my comments, based on my many years of caring deeply about John Carroll, will contribute to the effort underway to urge reconsideration of your decision regarding tenure and budgetary hardship.