

HOWARD UNIVERSITY

College of Arts and Sciences
Department of Physics & Astronomy

July 29, 2018

Dear Dr. Wutoh:

Most of the faculty I interact with try to adhere to values that have been the foundation of the strength and survival of the African American community. I mention this since these values were at the heart of my letter requesting the COAS Decanal Search timeline be extended.

For example, a junior faculty member (an assistant professor) politely disagreed with an HU Dean in a meeting. The disagreement was respectful and it was an example of the academic freedom that we expect for students and faculty. It was an occurrence that is normal at almost any American university. However, the Dean's response was anything but normal. The HU Dean said that he would "remember what was said" when the junior faculty member came up for tenure. According to this junior faculty member, the message from the HU Dean was clear. The message was that publicly disagreeing with the Dean would result in denial of tenure. The junior faculty member reported this to the HU upper administration, but nothing was done. Many tenured faculty were stunned and outraged when they learned of this. In fact, the administration's use of intimidation and retaliation was a reason why the faculty voted no-confidence in the HU upper administration. The outrage and no confidence votes were responses consistent with the best traditions of the African American community. We try to protect and support the members of our community, especially those that are vulnerable.

This is why I wrote that the appropriate faculty for the COAS Decanal Search Committee are tenured faculty. The tenured faculty appear to be the only potential committee members that may, if necessary, publicly oppose the selection of the administration's presumed favored decanal candidate without fear of substantial retaliation.

The Decanal Search timeline has a similar problem. Please recall that the HU administration scheduled a listening tour of Howard's schools and colleges last year. If I'm not mistaken, the tour was designed to be candid meetings between the provost and regular faculty - without any Deans present. I thought the tour was a good idea, and I hoped to mention some of the challenges COAS faculty face. I was actually looking forward to learning when the COAS meeting would be held. Unfortunately, I was stunned when I read in an email that the HU administration scheduled the meeting for 12/14/17. This date was two days after the end of the Fall 2017 semester.



In addition, the announcement came with only a little over a week's notice. Please remember, many faculty had made plans for the winter break that couldn't be changed at such short notice. Once we learned of the scheduled date and time, tenured COAS faculty members requested that the HU administration reschedule the meeting. But you refused to reschedule, and kept to the timeline. What was the result? Approximately 30 people attended. This represented about 7% of COAS.

I hope it's clear that the COAS faculty members spoke up for inclusion. We did everything we could to push the administration to extend the timeline and include as much faculty input as possible during the listening tour. We are doing the same now for the COAS Decanal Search. Most faculty made plans for the 3 month summer 2018 break. Some faculty are overseas, visiting laboratories in other states, or out of town and preparing for the upcoming semester. They are simply unavailable. This is why we are pushing for an extension of the search timeline. Our requests are consistent with the best traditions of African Americans. Our community has always raised our voices for fairness and inclusion, even if the consequences of speaking up are intimidation and retaliation.

I'm happy to say that some of my faculty colleagues live by the values that have protected and strengthened the African American community for centuries. I'm pretty sure our time tested values won't let us down now. I hope you won't continue to work against these values and, in the spirit of shared governance, that you will agree to an extended timeline.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Marcus Alfred', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Marcus Alfred
Associate Professor
3.14775