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Subject:Greg Patton update

Resent-Date:Fri, 25 Sep 2020 09:32:42 -0700

Resent-From: [REDACTED]

Date:Fri, 25 Sep 2020 16:32:33 +0000

From:Office of the Dean [REDACTED]



Office of the Dean

Dear Colleagues,

I have now attended department meetings at all seven of our academic units. Every meeting involved hard but important discussions, and I thank you for your willingness to freely and openly express your opinions and concerns.

A number of themes emerged that we will work on together in the months ahead. But one issue that stands in the way is the email I sent to our first-year full-time MBA students announcing that Professor Greg Patton was stepping aside from his GSBA 542 three-week course. I felt compelled to immediately address the genuine and serious concerns expressed by a number of student groups and individual students, including some enrolled in GSBA 542 who said they would stop attending the remaining two weeks of class. I will always respect and support students who come forward with concerns and will take them seriously, as I did in this case.

However, many of you have read that note as suggesting that I had prejudged the case. As I said when asked about this in the department meetings, this was not my intention. Nor was it my intent to cast aspersions on specific Mandarin words or on Mandarin generally. But I can see how reasonable people could draw a different conclusion in both cases from my email. I can only offer my sincere apologies that I left that impression, as I believed Professor Patton when he said he did not intend to do his students any harm and I have apologized to him as well.

The university's Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity and Title IX (EEO-TIX) looked into this matter and concluded that the concerns expressed by students were sincere, but that Professor Patton's actions did not violate the university's policy. They have also communicated this to the professor and he allowed me to share their conclusion with you.

To be clear, Professor Patton was never suspended nor did his status at Marshall change. He is currently teaching in Marshall's EMBA program and he will continue his regular teaching schedule next semester.

More generally, this incident has led many faculty to question whether they will be supported if they "make an honest mistake" in the classroom. Faculty are at the heart of all great business schools and every member of my leadership team will always do everything we can to support you and to ensure you thrive in both your research and teaching missions. We fully support our students and staff as well.

In order for our faculty and students to flourish in the classroom, it is essential that everyone feels free to express their views openly and to learn from each other from a perspective of mutual trust and respect. This can be challenging in today's charged environment, but we must all strive to find the right balance.

During my very brief tenure as dean, I have seen you all rise admirably to the challenge of giving our students the best possible education in a remote environment. But working from home has made it impossible for me to get to know you, and for you to get to know me. It has created stresses that we have never before experienced. This has been a very tough episode for all of us. But I very much look forward to moving beyond it to work with you to elevate Marshall to new heights. I believe the future is very bright.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Geoff Garrett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "G".

Geoff Garrett
Dean