

NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION
of SCHOLARS

7 August 2020

Jennifer Evans-Cowley, Ph.D.
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
University of North Texas
Hurley Administration Building, Room 201
1155 Union Circle #311277
Denton, Texas 76203-5017

Dear Provost Evans-Cowley,

I write to express my concern about your treatment of Timothy Jackson, Distinguished University Research Professor of Music Theory. An academic mob is attempting to punish Professor Jackson for vindicating Heinrich Schenker against the false charge of ‘systemic racism.’¹ You have authorized “a formal investigation into the conception and production of the twelfth volume of the *Journal of Schenkerian Studies*.”² Any such investigation lends support to the unsubstantiated and unsubstantiable aspersions on Professor Jackson’s professional character. It will also chill academic freedom, since such an “investigation” is a punishment in itself, which conveys the clear message that members of the University of North Texas will suffer procedural harassment, or worse, if they exercise their right to the free and fearless speech that rightly characterizes academic freedom.

I call upon you to end your investigation immediately, publish a letter that vindicates Professor Jackson’s professional character, state publicly that the University of North Texas commits itself foundationally to academic freedom, and reject any claim that any commitment to “combatting racism” or “academic responsibility” can or should infringe upon academic freedom.

¹ Samantha Harris, “At the University of North Texas, the Mob Comes Calling for a Music Theorist,” *The National Review*, July 31, 2020, <https://www.nationalreview.com/2020/07/at-the-university-of-north-texas-the-mob-comes-calling-for-a-music-theorist/>.

² John W. Richmond and Benjamin Brand, Schenkerian Journal Statement, College of Music, University of North Texas, <https://music.unt.edu/schenkerian-journal-statement>.

I write as President of the National Association of Scholars (NAS). NAS is a network of scholars and citizens united by our commitment to academic freedom, disinterested scholarship, and excellence in higher education. As part of our mission, we support intellectual freedom throughout America. We have more than thirty years of experience in advocating for the principles of intellectual freedom. (For further information, please see www.nas.org.)

I want to emphasize to you how specious is the gravamen of the charge that Professor Jackson and the *Journal of Schenkerian Studies* somehow failed to follow normal academic procedures and courtesies in publishing critiques of Professor Philip Ewell's charge that Heinrich Schenker is somehow complicit in "systemic racism." The *Journal of Schenkerian Studies* solicited leading figures of the field for their instant reactions, included some responses supporting Ewell, and would have been delighted to publish Ewell himself, if he had responded positively to their invitation to take part in the *Journal's* symposium. Academic journals do not and should not subject such symposia to peer review. The *Journal* acted entirely according to academic standards—and, indeed, in an exemplary fashion. I would further urge you to vindicate the *Journal's* adherence to academic norms and civilities in any public statement you make.

I write partly in the spirit of reminding you that your actions have caught the attention of academics far beyond your campus.

As a veteran of letters like this, I know that college officials often avoid answering in a meaningful way. My recourse is to publish my letters after a due period.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Wood". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping flourish at the end.

Peter Wood

President

National Association of Scholars