

NATIONAL  
ASSOCIATION  
*of* SCHOLARS

May 14, 2023

Dr. Melissa J. Baumann  
President Ohio Northern University  
525 South Main Street  
Ada, Ohio 45810

Dear President Baumann:

I am writing on behalf of Professor Scott Gerber, a member of the National Association of Scholars and professor of law at Ohio Northern University. NAS is an organization of professors, administrators, graduate students, teachers and independent scholars who share our mission focused on the traditional liberal arts in undergraduate education, to traditional standards of academic freedom and free expression on campuses, and to the observance of objective, uniform standards of due process in procedures relating to academic disciplinary matters.

I am appalled by the treatment ONU's senior administrators have meted out to Professor Gerber. His account published in *The Wall Street Journal* and the statement issued by FIRE are powerful indictments of the unfairness, callousness, and abuse of process that ONU has exhibited—I would say “in this case,” but in fact there is no case. As far as we on the outside can tell, there was only administrative whim.

I have known Professor Gerber for many years, and I know him to be sharp-witted and undeterred by pressures to conform himself to reigning ideology. He speculates in his *WSJ* op-ed that his criticisms of ONU's diversity, equity, and inclusion policies may have prompted the effort to purge him from the faculty. While that seems likely, we don't know. But whatever motivated the administration to take this action, the manner of taking it is inexcusable. What could possibly justify interrupting a professor's class in order to take him under escort to the dean? In the real world we call this bullying. Then to demand his capitulation on the spot without naming charges or following the university's written procedures? In the real world we call this contempt and intimidation.

I understand that the administrator in question, Law Dean Charles Rose, was not you. But it is inconceivable that a dean would undertake such an action without prior approval of the college president. If Dean Rose was acting on his own, it would be clear grounds for his dismissal, which as far as I can tell has not happened. So you own this situation.

All stories have two sides, and I am sure you have “reasons.” As someone who has dealt with academic freedom matters on many campuses over the course of three decades, I have heard

numerous stories of academic administrators who have been “fed up” with a faculty member who refuses to comply with what the administrator regards as a proper demand. Be that as it may, ONU has written rules and procedures laid out in its faculty documents. Your decision to bypass these rules and procedures was a mistake.

I don't know what action Professor Gerber will take at this point, but I have my own sense of the right way this should be settled. You should apologize publicly to Professor Gerber and explain to your board that you made a grave mistake.

Experience teaches me that these things are unlikely to happen, but now and then, they do, and I urge you to be one of the exceptions who recognizes when she has erred.

For my part, I will do what I can to keep public attention focused on your mistreatment of Professor Gerber. That will begin but not end by my making this letter public.

Yours,



Peter W. Wood  
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