

4 May 2014

To the Signatories of the Letter to Dr. Birgeneau

Dear Students and Colleagues:

I have been reflecting carefully on your letter and on the impact it has had on Dr. Birgeneau, our process for selecting honorary degree recipients, and our community. As I wrote to Michael Rushmore when I received the letter on Friday evening, I did not understand this letter to be an invitation to dialog, but rather an ultimatum with a long list of conditions. I observed that the letter read more like a jury issuing a verdict than as an invitation to discussion or a request for shared learning, which was the original purpose of the letter that I had proposed to Michael and Brian Brown when we met. We now have before us Dr. Birgeneau's response to the letter. Whereas I do not know if he now intends to join us at Commencement, I wanted to reach out to you to invite further discussion about matters of serious concern and importance to us all.

As part of the process of discerning truth, I have several questions that I believe are worthy of discussion by us all. To what extent can we be sure that we actually know fully what happened at Berkeley, and particularly the role played by Dr. Birgeneau without actually engaging him in discussion? To be sure, we have access to media reports and YouTube, but we know that these would not be sufficient for us to render a judgment in a conduct matter at Haverford. Why do we believe that it is reasonable or appropriate for us to determine sanctions, or perhaps we can call them remedies, for the Berkeley community in a matter that occurred 30 months ago and is still under review at Berkeley? Finally, given that we have a community process for nominating and selecting honorary degree recipients, why would we not want to engage the committee that did the work in discussion about their nomination, including their understanding of Dr. Birgeneau's role in the Berkeley incident? As I explained to Michael and Brian, this group, who has been delegated the responsibility of selecting honorary degree candidates, consists of students, faculty, staff, and members of the Board of Managers and the Corporation.

I believe that we, as a community, should come together to discuss what happened here, and to reflect on how we at Haverford can best make informed and ethical decisions in the face of uncertainty and various external pressures. Please know that my concerns as outlined above are not intended to diminish the importance of voices of dissent or the value of protest. They most surely are not. Abraham Lincoln wrote "It is a sin to be silent when it is your duty to protest." That I fully subscribe to such a view is attested by this letter.

As a next step, I will be convening an open meeting for the community later this week for us to discuss both the matter of Chancellor Birgeneau and how we deal

with complex community issues. I look forward to seeing you there for this important discussion.

Sincerely,

Dan Weiss