

October 16, 2006

Dear Faculty colleagues,

On Saturday, President Jordan appealed to the campus community to "...give Jane Fernandes the respect that is due her and the opportunity to bring us all together..." Last night, in a statement from the Board of Trustees, Chair Dr. Brenda Jo Brueggemann wrote that Dr. Fernandes "...deserves to be given the chance to assume the office we have appointed her to."

Six years ago, when President Jordan appointed Dr. Fernandes to lead the division of Academic Affairs as Provost of this institution, the Faculty Senate objected and reprimanded Dr. Jordan for violating the principle of shared governance in making that appointment. A minority of faculty members disagreed, believing that she should be given a chance. I was among them. We argued that we should support our President and Dr. Fernandes herself—to give her the opportunity to demonstrate that she could do the job as the university's highest academic officer. To that end a colleague and I mounted an official challenge to the Faculty Senate resolution, obtained the necessary signatures of 10% of the faculty, and the challenge went forward to the University Faculty. The Faculty overwhelmingly defeated our challenge, asking Dr. Fernandes to step down and sending a strong message to President Jordan that he was wrong to have appointed her unilaterally. Dr. Fernandes was, however, given the chance to lead because she refused to step aside and President Jordan refused to change his decision. Now history is repeating itself.

I was wrong six years ago. I failed to attend carefully to what my faculty colleagues were expressing. I wanted to believe Dr. Fernandes could do the job and I wanted to give her a chance. In her role as Provost and now as President Designate, Dr. Fernandes has had the chance to lead. Unfortunately, she not demonstrated the leadership and sensitivity that this community so desperately needs. She has divided the community, not united it. The University Faculty, having experienced six years of her leadership, voted "no confidence" in her as President Designate in May and asked her to step down so that the search could be re-opened. She refused. On October 11th, the Faculty officers with the support of their Advisory Committee, asked her to resign in order to bring this crisis to an end. She refused again. President Jordan tells us to give Dr. Fernandes the respect she is due but how do her actions demonstrate respect for the opinions of so many faculty, staff, students and alumni? What kind of a leader insists that only she knows what is best for our community while that community is being torn apart because of her appointment?

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