

Address to the Board of Trustees, April 5, 2012.

I am Mill Jonakait, a Distinguished Professor in the Biology Department and the erstwhile Dean of the College of Science and Liberal Arts. I am also the chair of Faculty Council, and I speak today on behalf of Faculty Council who represent the full faculty and who have unanimously approved my remarks.

Since Bob Altenkirch resigned, there has been a long overdue and most welcome initiation of communication between the Board of Trustees and the rest of the university. A member of the faculty has been invited to sit on the Board's Academic Affairs and Research Committee; your executive committee has met twice with faculty members from FC; Vince DeCaprio came to campus recently to chat with the committee of Distinguished Professors. These avenues of communication have not existed in the past, and the faculty hope that they will continue and expand.

There remains, however, a cloud hanging over this hopeful new day, and that cloud is the process by which the new president was selected. Some of my colleagues have advised me to forget about how the process was conducted and simply get on with it. However, we cannot "simply get on with it" because of recent statements by Board members that must not go unanswered. Some of the faculty members who served on the search committee have been publicly and unfairly labeled "irrational." And it has been publicly implied that I – as Chair of FC -- obstructed the process. Moreover, it has been stated that it is *because* of faculty actions that the presidential search had to be abruptly stopped. These allegations are simply not true.

First. The five faculty members who were selected to serve on the committee are among the most respected in the university. They have been labeled "irrational" simply because they wanted -- and fought for -- a legitimate search to take place, and the faculty voted overwhelmingly to support them in any actions that they made. They – and by extension, the faculty -- wanted the search done in a time frame that made sense for an up-and-coming research university; they wanted there to be no taint of a conflict of interest; they wanted to be certain that a broad range of candidates applied, and that the best of those candidates were given sufficient time on campus to learn about the

university and its goals. In short, they wanted the best candidate to emerge from a wide-ranging, legitimate search. Such desires are NOT irrational. Moreover, as it turned out, none of the things sought by the faculty occurred. No broad range of candidates – in fact, not one single candidate -- was interviewed; and the taint of a conflict of interest persisted throughout the process.

Now to my role: It has been publicly stated that following the walk-out of the 5 faculty members from the January 4 meeting of the search committee, Ms. Wielkopolski called me (I was in Florida) and asked me to appoint new faculty members to the committee *in order to assure that* the search procedures outlined in the NJIT Faculty Handbook would not be violated. Moreover, it is reported that I refused to appoint new members, thus CAUSING the search to end abruptly. This is simply not what happened.

First, Ms. Wielkopolski did NOT call me on or after January 4. Moreover, if their presence was perceived as critical to the process, it seems strange that no one from the Board reached out to the faculty members directly to urge them to return to the committee, but none did. In fact, a telephone conference initiated by two of the faculty members with Mr. Slimowicz that was scheduled for January 6 was cancelled -- by Mr. Slimowicz. Finally, it has become abundantly clear both from the subsequent actions of the Board in appointing Dr. Bloom without tenure or an appointment to an academic department and from Ms. Wielkopolski's emails to me and to the faculty, that following the Faculty Handbook is, sadly, not a high priority for the Board.

In short, the search was poorly, if not illegitimately, conducted. It failed to comply with procedures set out in the document – approved by you -- that governs this university. Moreover, it failed to comply with guidelines established by the AAUP and the American Association of Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities. Adding insult to injury, misstatements have been made publicly that impugn the faculty who served on the committee and me.

No one on the Board has come forward to rebut the documentation that has been prepared and made available to you about the presidential search. The university has acted further to deem those documents to be CONFIDENTIAL. We all agree that

personnel records of applicants should be kept confidential, but many of us fail to see why *in a public university* timelines, position descriptions, modes of handling nominations and/or applications, or even disagreements within the search committee – particularly when they concern the legitimacy of the process -- should be secret.

We must communicate better. This is a goal that is much to be desired. In fact, it is a goal specifically enumerated by the Middle States visiting team yesterday. If such communication is to exist, there must be trust on both sides. As noted in an AAUP letter to Ms. Wielkopolski and Mr. Slimowicz, which I have distributed to you here, “a university suffers when its faculty has come to perceive that its legitimate prerogatives have been disregarded through its exclusion in the appointment of the institution’s new president.” In short, the faculty HAS come to perceive that our legitimate prerogatives have been disregarded, and the university IS suffering as a result. I urge us all to try harder.