
Date: 10 December 2010

To: Amy King, Interim Director of Human Resources
Fr: Dean Saitta, President, Campus AAUP Chapter and Co-President, Colorado Conference of the AAUP
Re: DU's Gender Discrimination Complaint Process

After yesterday's "Annual Legal and Policy Update" meeting I was encouraged to reiterate the concerns I expressed verbally in a written memo to you. I'm doing so in my capacity as president of our campus AAUP chapter. The chapter's revival in 2007 was recently celebrated in DU's Re-Accreditation Self-Study (page 45) as an important governance accomplishment that gives faculty a strong, independent voice on matters relating to academic freedom, tenure and promotion, and overall working conditions.

In the Policy Update meeting I noted that, in my 4+ years of experience counseling faculty members having concerns about fair treatment in the workplace, there's a tendency on this campus for gender discrimination complaints to take an unreasonably long time to investigate and settle. I reported that there is serious discontent among faculty who've asked for investigations over the past 4 years about how the process works ("glacially slow", was the way I described it). I mentioned that the investigation in one current case still hasn't begun 6 months after it was requested. I noted, in this regard, that official DU policy stipulates that such investigations ordinarily should be completed within 3 months after the initial request. I suggested that all of this indicates a pervasive lack of respect for complainants. As you know, "Fostering Respect" is the buzz phrase that anchors the Annual Legal and Policy Update meeting.

I'd now like to add to what I said yesterday. All of what follows I included in a handwritten note that I gave to Sharon Gabel after the meeting for sharing with Susan Lee, who could not attend the meeting. In my note to Susan I suggested that the discrimination complaint processing machinery, if not broken, is seriously "gummed up." I also mentioned the current suspicion among faculty that extended delay in the processing of complaints looks like a "war of attrition" strategy employed by university agents in hopes that complainants will get fed up, fold their tents, and go away. I expressed a sincere hope that this wasn't the case. Finally, I noted that delays in the investigation of complaints not only indicates a lack of respect for the individual employee but in some instances (e.g., complaints that relate to negative decisions about promotion and tenure) are downright inhumane. It would be good to bear in mind that in such instances not only are individual careers on the line but also the future of entire families.

We need some serious change in the area of ODEO operations. Many thanks for your attention to this matter.