



**Middle
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Studies
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4 September 2007

The Rev. Dennis H. Holtschneider, C.M., Ed.D.
President, De Paul University
1 E. Jackson
Chicago, Illinois 60604

Fax: 312-362-7577

Dear President Holtschneider:

I write on behalf of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) and its Committee on Academic Freedom to express our concern and dismay at what appear to be your university's multiple and egregious violations of generally accepted standards of academic procedure in handling the tenure case of Professor Norman G. Finkelstein.

The Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) was founded in 1966 to promote scholarship and teaching on the Middle East and North Africa. The preeminent organization in its field, the Association publishes the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* and has more than 2700 members worldwide. MESA is committed to ensuring academic freedom and freedom of expression, both within the region and in connection with the study of the region in North America and elsewhere.

As you will remember, the Committee sent you a letter dated April 10, 2007, in which it expressed its grave concern about the politicization of Professor Finkelstein's tenure case as a result of the campaign launched against him by Professor Alan Dershowitz of the Harvard University Law School. In that letter we urged you to ensure that Professor Finkelstein be evaluated for tenure at DePaul solely on the basis of his scholarship, his teaching, and his service to his university and professional communities, and that all aspects of Professor Finkelstein's tenure process adhere to generally accepted procedures and standards. We regret that you did not choose to respond to that letter.

Unfortunately, developments at DePaul since that letter was sent indicate that proper procedures and standards were not being adhered to in Professor Finkelstein's case. As a consequence the Committee now feels compelled to write you again, because in the aftermath of DePaul's decision to deny tenure to Professor Finkelstein your administration appears to have violated accepted academic procedures and standards in at least two ways.

First, we deem unacceptable your administration's refusal to permit Professor Finkelstein to pursue a formal appeal of the decision to deny him tenure. As you no doubt know, such a right of appeal is accepted by most leading institutions of higher education in this country. Our concern about this arbitrary and unjust decision is shared by your own university's Faculty Council and by the American Association of University Professors, among others.

Second, we feel obliged to register our distress at reports that your administration has, just a few days before the beginning of the fall semester, suddenly decided to prevent Professor Finkelstein from teaching during his terminal year at DePaul, taken away his office, and put him on paid administrative leave. As you surely know, it is customary to permit faculty who have been denied tenure to teach for one final year. Your administration's abrupt decision to prevent Professor Finkelstein (who is by all accounts an outstanding teacher) from doing so, without his agreement and despite strong objections from members of your own faculty and student body, strikes us as high-handed, if not vindictive.

However one judges Professor Finkelstein's qualifications for tenure, it seems clear that DePaul has mishandled his case in a variety of ways and has repeatedly violated generally accepted standards of academic process and fair play. In so doing your administration has in effect given aid and comfort to those who seek to undermine the academy as a bastion of academic freedom and as a forum for the open and critical discussion of issues of vital public concern.

We live in a time when scholars, teachers and institutions of higher education across the United States are facing extraordinary pressures and vituperative assaults from individuals and organized groups based outside the academy and pursuing narrow partisan agendas, particularly with respect to United States policy in the Middle East and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is therefore highly distressing that you and your administration at DePaul have in this case signally failed to adhere to accepted standards of academic procedure or to protect the rights of every member of your faculty.

We therefore call on you to promptly reconsider and reverse both of these arbitrary and misguided decisions, in order to undo the damage already done to DePaul University's reputation as an institution of higher education and to help protect the norms of academic life and the principle of academic freedom that your university professes to cherish.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Zachary Lockman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Zachary Lockman
MESA President