



September 10, 2014

Chancellor Phyllis M. Wise
Swanlund Administration Building
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
601 E. John St.
Champaign, IL 61820

Dear Chancellor Wise,

We write in our capacity as President and President-Elect of the American Political Science Association, a scholarly association that represents over 12,000 professors and students of political science worldwide. As described in our Constitution (Article II.2), the Association may take action “in support of academic freedom and of freedom of expression by and within the Association, the political science profession, and the university, when in its judgment such freedom has been clearly and seriously violated or is clearly and seriously threatened.” It is with grave concern that we enquire about the recent decision to withdraw the offer made to Steven Salaita for a tenured faculty position in the American Indian Studies Program, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Based on media reports, we understand that Professor Salaita was extended an offer of employment in October 2013 on the merits of his scholarly record, following a standard review and hiring process. We further understand you informed Professor Salaita on August 1, 2014 that his offer would not be taken to the Board of Trustees for what, in other cases, has been a routine approval prior to the start of the academic year. According to reports, this action followed a number of complaints regarding Professor Salaita’s tweets on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These media reports, supplemented by the open letters from the American Historical Association, American Association of University Professors, and the American Comparative Language Association, raise troubling questions about the decision of UIUC administrators, your commitment to free speech, academic freedom, and academic governance.

Against this backdrop, we ask for a thorough, transparent, and publicly accessible review of the procedural irregularities and their implications for future academic contracts, and Professor Salaita’s offer of a tenured faculty position. The issue is complex, and our concerns are twofold. The failure to follow one’s own stipulated procedures in this one instance would in itself be of concern. But the failure to follow established procedures especially in a context where the speech acts at



hand are considered both uncivil and deeply political tests the premise that academic appointment decisions be made without regard to candidates' political beliefs. Academic freedom in the United States is based on deep, longstanding political and legal commitments to civil liberties – especially when those liberties protect a content and manner of speech which we may find deplorable. Accordingly, we encourage you to carefully reconsider your decision in light of the procedural and substantive concerns described above.

Yours sincerely,

Rodney E. Hero
President, American Political Science Association

Jennifer Hochschild
President-Elect, American Political Science Association