

On Wednesday, August 27, 2014, the faculty of the Department of Asian American Studies cast a vote of no confidence in UIUC Chancellor Phyllis Wise and the Board of Trustees.

In response to the firing of Professor Steven Salaita by the Chancellor, an act that undermined shared governance and unit autonomy, and the recent suggestions reported in the media of external pressures from donors and alumni in the hiring process well after the standard vetting process was concluded, we no longer have faith in the Chancellor and the Board of Trustees who are implicated in this highly irregular action. Additionally, we are suspicious of the recent move by the Senate Executive Committee to aid the administration in regularizing these processes for undermining unit autonomy.

Although the recent statements of the Chancellor and the Board of Trustees on Friday, August 22nd, affirm the values of dialogue and diversity, we believe this decision has done enormous harm to our campus and has created a climate that does not honor dissent. Set in the context of the recent Israeli bombing of Gaza, the Chancellor claims to have made this decision based on tweets with an inappropriate tone of incivility. We believe her actions exceeded the bounds of the rules and policies that govern our university. Furthermore, the firing of Salaita has created an atmosphere of fear and retaliation for unpopular academic, political, and personal pursuits.

The administration's claims to honor diversity are at odds with the marginalization of academic units that represent the teaching and research of topics related to racialized populations. These units serve as the face of diversity on this campus, yet their autonomy is willfully disregarded. Thus, the University continues a superficial endorsement of diversity through its contradictory actions regarding issues of racial injustice and violence.

In solidarity with the American Indian Studies program and thousands of scholars and organizations around the world, we see the Chancellor's decision and the approval by the Board of Trustees as a violation of academic freedom and the First Amendment right of freedom of speech.