



Communication and Marketing Department
Isebe loThungelwano neNtengiso
Kommunikasie en Bemerkingsdepartement

Private Bag X3, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa
Welgelegen House, Chapel Road Extension, Rosebank, Cape Town
Tel: +27 (0) 21 650 5427/5428/5674 Fax: +27 (0) 21 650 5628

www.uct.ac.za

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UCT statement in relation to false allegations made on social media about the finances of the Faculty of Law

The University of Cape Town (UCT) has taken note of the recent social media posts that make very serious allegations about the financial management of the UCT Faculty of Law. The allegations include claims of fraud and other impropriety, and specifically include claims that the former dean of the faculty, Professor Penelope Andrews, was involved in this inappropriate activity. The posts also included parts of financial statements from the faculty, claiming that these were evidence of fraudulent behaviour and that this caused the institution to force Professor Andrews to resign.

UCT wants to make it absolutely clear that Professor Andrews was not forced to resign. Professor Andrews was offered an invitation to take up a fellowship at the Center for the Study of Law and Culture at Columbia University School of Law, where she will be pursuing a joint project with the centre on comparative legal education.

She decided to pursue this offer and tendered her resignation to the executive accordingly. Her resignation was accepted. Her accumulated study and research leave will enable her to take up the fellowship from 1 August 2018 and an acting dean has been appointed until the post is filled as per due process.

UCT is distressed at the allegations levelled at both Professor Andrews and the faculty and reject these with contempt. The release of these documents, which are meant to be confidential, coupled with the allegations of criminal activity is a regrettable act. To hide behind anonymity only serves to strengthen the impression that this is nothing more than a smear campaign intended to hurt Professor Andrews and the faculty, and this act is condemned in the strongest terms.

The allegations of financial mismanagement and fraud by Professor Andrews are emphatically denied. UCT rejects strongly the accusation that she mismanaged or misappropriated university funds. The faculty board recently had the opportunity to

examine the financial management of the faculty, and the overall financial position of the faculty is sound and stable.

The allegations in the posts of financial misconduct by Professor Andrews in relation to her business travel in particular are denied. All business travel by the dean was authorised by the UCT executive and due process was followed.

The allegations that under expenditure on certain budget items (books and funding to students) is why Professor Andrews was asked to leave are malicious. Over and under expenditure is natural in the budget process and the faculty's under expenditure was in line with budget variances allowed within the UCT guidelines. The faculty management committee and the faculty board, under the leadership of the acting dean, has dealt appropriately with issues of variances in budget spend in the faculty.

The allegations in the posts that Professor Andrews exercised favouritism with regards to one particular employee by granting travel opportunities are rejected.

Concerns have recently been raised in the faculty by Professor Andrews and faculty staff relating to, among other things, issues of climate, communication, governance and committee structures. In response, the UCT executive set up a commission, under the leadership of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor responsible for Teaching and Learning, to conduct an assessment of the status of the Faculty of Law. The commission has concluded its work (including multiple interviews with staff members) and has presented a report to the Vice-Chancellor. Once approved by the Vice-Chancellor, the report will be shared with the faculty and the relevant information will be shared with the executive committee of Council.

ENDS

Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

Gerda Kruger

Executive Director: Communication and Marketing
University of Cape Town
Rondebosch
Tel: (021) 650 3732
Email: gerda.kruger@uct.ac.za
Website: www.uct.ac.za