

MAY 11, 2023: YVC FACULTY UNION ISSUES STATEMENT REGARDING VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE IN PRESIDENT

Media Release

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Yakima Valley College Unions Vote No Confidence in President; Hold Press Conference on Education Program Closures and Faculty Layoffs

Yakima, WA – Fed up with the actions of an increasingly unaccountable administration, AFT Yakima Faculty, Local 1485, held a vote of confidence in the college's president, Dr. Linda Kaminski. The vote follows several years of the administration's anti-transparent actions, including lack of transparency in policies regarding faculty hiring and tenure, concerns from faculty and staff who were unable to have their harassment claims investigated or tracked, closure of essential programs, and a general lack of communication and transparency between Yakima Valley College's administration and the college community of students, staff, and faculty.

The American Federation of Teachers faculty union, which represents roughly 300 full- and part-time faculty at Yakima Valley College, is holding a press conference Thursday, May 11th at 12:30 to announce the results of the vote and speak about the issues which led to it being held.

At a meeting of the union membership, on April 12, a vote of confidence was held on Dr. Kaminski's leadership. After the final tally, 88% of the membership in attendance voted that they had "no confidence" in Dr. Kaminski's leadership of the college. No members voted "confidence" in Dr. Kaminski's leadership, and 12% abstained from voting.

"We didn't want to do this, but all of our other efforts have failed," said Rachel Dorn, AFT-Yakima faculty president, "We have been trying to reach out to the school leadership and the Board of Trustees about our concerns for over a year, but there has been very little dialogue and we get the impression that leadership is not taking these concerns seriously."

Throughout the year, AFT-Y has been bringing attention to issues ranging from a lack of policies around promotion and hiring, to concerns over the college's failure to follow policies related to reporting and investigation of harassment and retaliation. "We've lost valuable members of our YVC community due to the college administration's inability to follow or enforce these basic policies," said Steve Rodrigue, Physics and Engineering Instructor at YVC.

Most recently, the YVC community has been upset by the sudden closure of the Bachelors of Applied Science in Teacher Education (BAS-TE) program, whose graduates are helping to fill in the shortage of K-12 teachers in the region. After finding out about the proposed closure and the layoff of a beloved faculty member, students, faculty, and community members attended the March Board meeting in an attempt to prevent the Trustees from voting for the closure, which faculty say was unwarranted and contrary to the needs of the program and its students. The Trustees approved of the closure and layoffs before hearing from students and supporters. "The Yakima Valley needs this program and it needs quality instructors," said Julie Schillreff, Education Instructor at YVC.

The faculty union is asking the public to attend the board of trustees meeting on May 11 at 4:30pm in the West Conference Center building 38, room 122, room D to comment on the closure of the BAS-TE program and the non-renewal of a BAS-TE Instructor. The college announced it was suspending its acceptance of new students in March of this year.

The faculty union is also asking the public to come and support the seven full-time instructors whose contracts were non-renewed at the board meeting in March. The college did not follow the contractual process for non-renewal of Special Faculty faculty, claiming, instead, that the faculty who were non-renewed were designated as "temporary," a category of faculty that is not defined by the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

AFT-Y has filed grievances protesting the closure of the BAS-TE program and the non-renewal process for the impacted faculty.

"Through anti-transparent hiring processes and her [Dr. Kaminski's] influence on the makeup of the Board of Trustees, she has created a college structure and culture that does not allow for shared governance," said Vicente Lopez, faculty counselor at YVC.

Liz DeVilleneuve, another faculty counselor, said that, "The college speaks about diversity, equity and inclusion but doesn't follow through in its actions. Harassment and retaliation are not seriously addressed, and the Board does not hold the president accountable."

In the wake of accusations of retaliation from staff and administrators, YVC employees at all levels feel that speaking out puts their jobs at risk. "It's the culture of intimidation and fear, the perception that if you speak out you risk being retaliated against and possibly losing your job," said Shannon Hopkins, English Instructor at YVC.

"Faculty, via tenure and via their union, are the YVC employees best positioned to bring these concerns to light, because it is harder to retaliate against us for speaking up for the good of our students and the college," said Tim Jeske, Political Science Instructor at YVC..

Faculty and staff at the college have been raising issues to the Board of Trustees and upper administration for months, but have received minimal response from the Board. "When we had our first press conference [in March] and invited students, the press, and the public to the Board of Trustees meeting, that was the most interaction we had seen from the Board in a long time," said Dorn.

"We understand there are real challenges, right now. What we have been asking for since September is communication and dialogue. Talk to us about the problems and work WITH us on solutions," said Brock Eubanks, economics instructor at YVC.

AFT-Y is asking that students, community members, and the press come to the press conference, which will be held on the northeast corner of 16th Ave and Nob Hill at 12:30 PM, Thursday, May 11. It is also asking those interested to attend the next Board of Trustees meeting on May 11, 4:30 PM, in room 122 of the West Campus Conference Center (building 38) on the Yakima Valley College campus.

MAY 11, 2023: YVC BOARD OF TRUSTEES' INITIAL RESPONSE TO UNION'S VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE IN PRESIDENT

Hi Emily,

Following up, here is the statement from the chair of our Board of Trustees, Castulo "Cus" Arteaga:

We appreciate the work and leadership of President Kaminski. As trustees, our focus is on making sure that Yakima Valley College is fulfilling its mission to serve our students and to strengthen the entire Yakima Valley.

I, as board chair, along with the incoming chair, recently met with faculty leaders at their request. The college is providing detailed information to answer the three questions they asked related to college policies and procedures.

Our focus will remain on advancing YVC's mission.

Then, here's a statement from me regarding the college's Bachelor of Applied Science in Teacher Education that I mentioned to you when we chatted on the phone:

The Bachelor of Applied Science in Teacher Education program is currently engaged in new opportunities that will continue to reflect teaching and learning best practices, along with excellent student supports. To ensure continuity for our students, we are postponing the Fall cohort of students and will accept applications beginning in February 2024 for our next Bachelor of Applied Science in Teacher Education cohort that will start classes in Fall 2024.

It is important to note that juniors currently in the college's program will be continuing on for their second year in our program during the 2023-24 academic year. So, our Teacher Education program will not at any point be closed.

I'm checking related to the tenure parameters now and will let you know what I hear back.

Cheers,
Dustin



Dustin Wunderlich

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Read the latest edition of [YVC Voice magazine](#).

MAY 11, 2023: EMAIL FROM YVC SPOKESPERSON REGARDING TENURE INFORMATION PROVIDED TO UNION

Hi Emily,

Following up about tenure information, below is information that was provided to the faculty union regarding tenure decisions following the meeting the board chair and incoming chair had with faculty leaders. I also want to note that this information about tenure was shared with the union president in September 2022 upon her request.

Cheers,
Dustin

How do special faculty move to Tenure Track positions?

Scenario #1 – Process for Special Faculty transitioning to a new tenured position.

Depending on state funding availability and program needs, a new tenure track position may be advertised. Special Faculty with the appropriate qualifications can apply and interview as well as others who do not already work at the college. The successful candidate would begin the tenure review process the following Fall quarter after being hired.

Scenario #2 – Process for Special Faculty transition to a vacant tenure track position.

When a tenured faculty member retires or otherwise vacates a position, the college can transition a qualified Special Faculty member to the vacant position. If there is more than one qualified Special Faculty member, the college would make a selection based on the following factors:

- Seniority
- Special knowledge/experience
- Innovative teaching practices
- Diversity
- Demonstrated student success
- Curriculum development
- Commitment to professional development
- Consultation with the Dean and VPISS

The chosen faculty member would begin the tenure track process the following Fall quarter.

Scenario #3 – Process for transitioning Special Faculty to tenure track when legislation provides partial funding for new tenure positions.

YVC was allocated partial funding (additional \$221,497 was required) for ten additional tenured faculty positions over the 2021-2023 biennium. Consistent with information provided by the State Board staff, YVC chose to do three positions in the first year and seven in the second year.

- In the first year, (2021-2022) consideration was given to seniority, the ratio of fulltime to part-time faculty by department, and providing one position to each of the three academic divisions.
- In the second year, the same criteria was used but other criteria were added based on the actual language of the final legislation, numerous discussions with the State Board staff and other system

colleges, and feedback from legislators and others.

- We also considered the substantial negative impact of COVID on our college enrollment (loss of 1637 students over the previous two years unevenly represented in academic divisions / departments;), budget (the corresponding loss of tuition revenue over the same period and new rules regarding the use of federal funding;) and the uncertainty of the effects of current and future COVID variants on our ability to maintain our current programs when the COVID funding is depleted or expires.

As responsible stewards of our limited resources and with consideration of an unpredictable future and a focus on equity, we added additional criteria to inform our decisions. The additional criteria included but was not limited to:

- the ratio of all faculty and tenured faculty to students enrolled in specific departments,
- the courses/programs that require faculty with specialized knowledge which is difficult to find,
- the programs that are in highest demand in our local communities,
- the faculty positions that are most difficult to recruit,
- the specific courses which are required for graduation,
- programs which have the highest graduation rates,
- equity / diversity
- stability of enrollment including both campuses, including all academic divisions, maximum of one faculty per department.

In addition to considering the relevant data, we consulted with deans and the VPISS; thoughtfully interpreted the language of the legislation; and spread the new positions over as many different departments, divisions, and campuses as possible.

We will continue to recognize seniority as one of many relevant criteria. Tenure decisions have far reaching effects on our institutional financial sustainability and our ability to maintain the quality of the critical academic programs we offer. We must consider all available data to inform such important decisions.



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JUNE 6, 2023: YVC BOARD OF TRUSTEES RELEASES STATEMENT SUPPORTING PRESIDENT

YVC board releases statement supporting president, responding to faculty union vote

The Yakima Valley College Board of Trustees released a statement today, June 6, in response to the AFT Yakima faculty union's vote of no confidence of YVC President Linda Kaminski. The union announced the results of the vote at the public Board meeting in May.

The statement commends Kaminski and notes the Board's continued support for her leadership of the institution.

The five-person board consists of Board Chair Castulo "Cus" Arteaga, Vice Chair Bertha Ortega, Dr. Sara Cate, Patrick Baldoz and Neil McClure.

The board's statement is as follows:

On May 10, 2023, the AFT-Y faculty union informed the YVC Board of Trustees of a vote of no confidence in President Linda Kaminski without providing supportive information.

The role of the Board of Trustees is governance of the institution. It is not to intervene in the established process or to overturn the decisions of administration whose primary responsibility is the effective operation of the college.

We the Board commend the president for her 28-year commitment to putting students first. President Kaminski has been and continues to be an effective leader. We the Board have seen no evidence of financial mismanagement, no evidence of lack of transparency or evidence of retaliation. Therefore, we the Board of Trustees will continue to fully support her as the President of this College.

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JUNE 7, 2023: UNION RESPONDS TO YVC BOARD OF TRUSTEES' JUNE 6, 2023 STATEMENT

AFT-Y response to Yakima Valley College Board of Trustees statement on the Vote of No Confidence

On Tuesday, the AFT-Yakima faculty president, Rachel Dorn, spoke to KIMA regarding the statement released that day by the Yakima Valley College Board of Trustees.

In her statement at the May Board meeting, YVC President Linda Kaminski talked repeatedly about “fake news” and asked the HR director to tell her if YVC had hired Tucker Carlson or installed a torture chamber on campus. The torture chamber comments were in reference to faculty and staff concerns about retaliation in the form of reassignments, non-renewals, and disrespect from supervisors.

The union is disappointed that, in light of Dr. Kaminski’s offensive and unprofessional comments at the May board meeting, the Trustees voiced such broad and unqualified support for her leadership.

The Board statement further indicated that they see no evidence of a lack of transparency, even though AFT-Y has brought concerns to the Board this year regarding tenure-track movement, harassment reporting, hiring, program closure, and more. Further, Dr. Kaminski’s own report at the May meeting underscored the lack of a transparent process for movement to tenure-track. She explained how those positions are funded, but not how decisions are made about which faculty are moved into those positions.

The Board said they see no evidence of retaliation, but they have had ample opportunity to read the report on a recent Title IX investigation conducted in the fall of 2022. That report included reports of retaliation that suggest something is wrong with how harassment allegations are handled at YVC. Additionally, at the March meeting, a YVC graduate spoke about their own experience with harassment reporting which raised similar concerns.

The Board statement also refers to “financial mismanagement” which is something AFT-Y has not alleged. We have concerns with processes and policies and we disagree with some of the school’s decisions about when and where to spend money and we don’t understand why the school chooses to fight against faculty compensation when the funding seems to be intended for faculty.

YVC faculty have lost confidence in Dr. Kaminski's ability to lead the college. Our concerns are broader than a list of errors that can be easily fixed or explained, but we have been providing "supportive information" to the Board publicly, privately, and in writing since at least September.

In their statement, the Board indicates that their role is "governance of the institution" but that they aren't able to "intervene." We don't understand how governance can be achieved without intervention or decision making. They also say that they don't "overturn decisions" made by administration, but they do vote on these decisions. If the Board takes its governance role seriously, their votes need to be based on informed decision making, rather than automatically agreeing to every proposal from administration.

AFT-Y wants to be on good terms with school leadership. Faculty, staff, and students have brought these concerns to the board because we are hoping to be able to work with them to make YVC better. This response is disappointing, because it seems to suggest that the Board are not hearing us or taking our concerns seriously.

JUNE 8, 2023: YVC SPOKESPERSON DUSTIN WUNDERLICH PROVIDES KAPP-KVEW WITH RESPONSE TO UNION'S STATEMENT ON JUNE 7, 2023

There has been substantial misinformation shared by AFT-Y in media releases and press conferences. Including the most recent media release on June 7, 2023.

To clarify:

1. The AFT-Y has received detailed information about the movement of special faculty to tenure track. They received a detailed document in September 2022 and again on May 10, 2023. It was also addressed at the May 11, 2023 Board of Trustees meeting. Disagreement with the answer is not lack of transparency.
2. The Title IX investigation that began in Fall of 2022 followed all federal and college procedures. Since no AFT-Y members were involved in any way, federal law prohibits their input, involvement or participation before, during or after the conclusion. Therefore, the AFT-Y's February 2023 demand for the Board to have the investigation redone is prohibited as well. There are clear procedures and processes for harassment claims, all claims are investigated.
3. There have been no program closures and none are planned for the near future. The teacher education program continues to operate. The Fall 2023 cohort of new students is postponed while revisions are made to strengthen the program. The AFT-Y has repeatedly made false statements about the program being eliminated.
4. The AFT-Y has repeatedly accused the college of misusing state funds, verbally and through signage at a press conference. The college recently received a positive state financial audit and a positive state accountability audit. The colleges are audited every year and YVC consistently receives positive reviews.
5. There is no evidence of "retaliation against employees in the form of reassignments, non-renewals, or disrespect from supervisors." Non-renewals are necessary when grant or contract funding ends or conditions change. Reassignments occur to fill unmet needs or changing priorities.
6. The college did not "fight against faculty compensation" but has consistently promoted it. Recent legislation provided one-time stipends for Nurse Faculty and High Demand Faculty. The legislation required that the method of distribution be negotiated between the AFT-Y and the College. The College and Union agreed on the method resulting in \$30,500 stipends for Nurse Faculty, \$8,000 stipends for Workforce Faculty and \$3,000 for STEM Faculty.

The College has followed the established process as stated in the AFT-Y collective bargaining agreement to resolve each and every issue identified in the AFT-Y June 7 response. Not liking the outcome of the process is not evidence of inaction or retaliation.