

November 12th, 2007

To: Dr. Gary Smith
Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences
MSC 03 2040, Northrop Hall
University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, NM 87131

Dr. Smith,

Several months ago, we contacted Dr. John Geissman and Dr. Les McFadden regarding concerns about unethical publishing practices and possible plagiarism from a member of your adjunct faculty, Dr. Spencer Lucas. A copy of our original letter is enclosed. We made clear that we considered Dr. Lucas' behavior to be unethical, thought that the department should be concerned about allegations against a member of its adjunct faculty, and requested that the department investigate the matter.

Dr. Geissman responded to our letter and we exchanged several messages. A copy of Dr. Geissman's formal response is also enclosed. To summarize, Dr. Geissman initially assured us in this letter that our allegations concerned him, but that he was "not quite certain exactly what can, or should be, done from UNM's side", and that it was his understanding "that adjunct faculty are not legally bound to any practices spelled out in the UNM Faculty Handbook." He also informed us that he would contact Dr. Lucas and ask his side of the story (which we of course fully endorse and encourage), and get back to us. Dr. Geissman later contacted us to inform us that our allegations would be discussed when Dr. Lucas' adjunct faculty position was reviewed, but that no other action would be taken in the interim. We asked about Dr. Lucas' response to our allegations, but Dr. Geissman did not answer our question, and only repeated that our allegations would be considered when Dr. Lucas' adjunct faculty position was reviewed.

We were unsatisfied with this response. Dr. Lucas is clearly and openly affiliated with, and therefore a representative of, the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences. We therefore have a difficult time believing that his behavior is not the department's problem. We are also troubled that Dr. Geissman seemed to regard the information we provided merely as something for the department to put on the shelf for its own use in making an intradepartmental decision at some indefinite point in the future. Individuals *outside* the department have been impacted and are concerned by Dr. Lucas' behavior, have appealed to your department, and requested immediate investigation and action.

It is our impression that Dr. Geissman is not interested in discussing the matter further, and we are hoping you would be willing to answer our questions:

- 1) Is the University of New Mexico, and more specifically the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences, responsible for the behavior of its adjunct faculty? Are allegations of academic theft, supported by documentation, sufficient to warrant an *immediate* investigation by the department and/or university?
- 2) When is Dr. Lucas' adjunct faculty position under review? We might consider a thorough investigation of Dr. Lucas' conduct during such a review a satisfactory response to our concerns, if such an investigation is in the immediate future.

- 3) If our allegations are investigated and found to be valid, will this be made public? If they are investigated and *not* considered valid, will we given a full explanation of why? We consider the evidence we have provided to support our case (discussed in our enclosed letter to Dr. Geissman) to be fairly airtight, and we would expect a detailed explanation of why the department did not agree.

As concerned members of the academic community, we feel that we have a legitimate complaint, supported by documentation, which should be sincerely and openly shared by both the University of New Mexico and the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences. Although we initially detected a sense of genuine concern and urgency in our early correspondence with Dr. Geissman, it was not sustained, and we feel that the situation has been left in an unsatisfactory limbo. We have the uncomfortable feeling that our case is being quietly sidelined by the department and the university without any intention of clearly answering our allegations either publically or privately. We hope that you can alleviate our concerns.

Sincerely,

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