August 23, 2015

Dear President Killeen and Acting Chancellor Wilson,

We the forty-one undersigned Executive Officers and campus leaders from departments and academic units across the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign urge you to help end the crisis that has plagued our university for more than a year. It has increasingly become clear that the decision to rescind Dr. Steven Salaita’s appointment as an associate professor with indefinite tenure in the American Indian Studies Program violated the principles of shared faculty governance and may also be legally liable. The decision has also inflicted harm upon the reputation and standing of our university.

The AAUP has censured the Urbana-Champaign campus for the violation of academic freedom. An ongoing academic boycott against our campus continues to adversely affect an important dimension of our intellectual livelihood. More than 5,000 scholars around the world, many of them prominent intellectuals, refuse to participate in talks or conferences at the University of Illinois. Such events are part of the exchange of ideas for which our campus has always been known, and their cancellation impoverishes the conversation on campus to the detriment of students and faculty alike. Over the long term, it threatens our competitiveness in bringing in external funding and recruiting distinguished scholars.

We are therefore asking you to use the authority of your offices to recommend to the Board of Trustees that they reverse their previous decision and reinstate Dr. Salaita at the next board meeting in September. We firmly believe that this step will help put the university on track toward ending AAUP censure and regaining its place among the most respected public institutions of higher education in the country. The decision to reinstate Dr. Salaita will also make it easier to resolve pending litigation and save the university community and state taxpayers from the high costs of defending a wrong decision in the court of law.

We ask for a meeting to discuss our request to restore the rightful stature of the University of Illinois.

Sincerely,

James Anderson, Head, Department of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership
Matthew Ando, Chair, Department of Mathematics
Antoinette Burton, Interim Director, Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities
C.L. Cole, Head, Department of Media and Cinema Studies
David Cooper, Director, Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center
Clare Crowston, Chair, Department of History
Jerry Dávila, Director, Lemann Institute for Brazilian Studies
Anna Maria Escobar, Director, Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies
Michael Finke, Head, Slavic Languages and Literatures
Stephanie Foote, Chair, Department of Gender and Women’s Studies
Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi, Interim Director, Center for South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies
Greg Girolami, Head, Department of Chemistry
Wâl Hassan, Director, Center for Translation Studies
Stephanie Hilger, Head, Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures
Valerie Hoffman, Head, Department of Religion
Valerie Hotchkiss, Director, Rare Book and Manuscript Library
Jonathan X. Inda, Head, Department of Latina/Latino Studies
Jeffrey Eric Jenkins, Head, Department of Theatre
Lilya Kaganovskiy, Director, Program in Comparative and World Literature
Brett Kaplan, Director, Program in Jewish and Culture and Society
Marcus Keller, Head, Department of French and Italian
Edward Kolodziej, Director, Center for Global Studies
Susan Koshy, Director, Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory
Soo Ah Kwon, Head, Department of Asian American Studies
Jean-Philippe Mathy, Director, School of Literatures, Cultures, and Linguistics
David O’Brien, Chair, Art History Program
Robert B. Olshansky, Head, Department of Urban and Regional Planning
Andrew Orta, Head, Department of Anthropology
Jesse Ribot, Director, Social Dimensions of Environmental Policy Program
Michael Rothberg, Head, Department of English
Kirk Sanders, Chair, Department of Philosophy
Spencer Schaffner, Director, Center for Writing Studies
Douglas Simpson, Chair, Department of Statistics
Anna W. Stenport, Director, European Union Center
Eleonora Stoppino, Director, Program in Medieval Studies
Andrew Suarez, Head, Department of Animal Biology
William Sullivan, Head, Department of Landscape Architecture
Jonathan V. Sweedler, Director, School of Chemical Sciences
Ariana Traill, Head, Department of the Classics
Robert Warrior, Director, Program in American Indian Studies
Assata Zerai, Director, Center for African Studies