

September 30, 1994

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From: an125095@anon.penet.fi

To: prince@lc.lindenwood.edu

Subject: Root Rot

ROOT ROT A JOURNAL OF DISSIDENT NEWS AND VIEWS LINDENWOOD
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This past June, Lindenwood College earned the distinction of being the first college ever to be sanctioned by the American Association of University Professors for governance violations. The following report appeared in the September-October 1994 'Academe.' For a fuller report of the AAUP's investigations of abusive practices at Lindenwood, see the May-June 1994 issue.

Statements on Case Reports Presented by Committee T to the
1994 Annual Meeting

The investigating committee's report deals with conditions of academic government at Lindenwood College under the administration of Dennis Spellmann, who has been the institution's chief executive officer since the spring of 1989. When Mr. Spellmann arrived at Lindenwood College, it was in a parlous financial condition. During his five years at the college he has managed to cut the budget deficit, substantially increase enrollment and salaries, and restore the institution to financial health.

If material conditions at Lindenwood College have improved under President Spellmann, the investigating committee found, the same cannot be said for collegial government, faculty status, and the quality of academic life at the institution.

Prior to Mr. Spellmann's arrival at Lindenwood College, the faculty was significantly involved in institutional government. The college's governing documents, the 'Faculty Constitution' and the 'Faculty Bylaws,' were premised on a commitment to shared authority and cooperative action. The system of academic government then in place provided for an elected, representative Faculty Council having broad authority and responsibility in college government, along with several elected faculty committees. The faculty had an effective voice in determining the basic academic policies of the institution through these instruments of shared, consultative governance and through the considerable degree of independence exercised by the faculty in important areas of academic activity.

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Upon his arrival at the college, Mr. Spellmann, with the concurrence of the board of directors, effected drastic changes in academic government. Replacing the existing documents and governance system was a new governance structure centered on a Council of Deans, responsible to the president, with its members appointed by the president and serving at his pleasure. In contrast to the norms enunciated in the 'Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities,' governance at Lindenwood College under President Spellmann, the investigating committee found, is firmly controlled from the top. Mr. Spellmann's administration has a highly centralized decision-making process, with most power and authority concentrated in the office of the president. Faculty meetings are conducted with rigidly controlled agendas, not published in advance, and with little or no purpose other than to hear administration reports and announcements of decisions previously made, or actions already taken! by the president. No forum exists

The institutional regulations in effect at Lindenwood College prior to 1989 provided for a system of tenure and academic due process modeled on the 1940 'Statement of Academic Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure.' Following its appointment of Mr. Spellmann, the Lindenwood College board of directors, acting on his initiative and pursuant to a declaration of financial exigency, declared a freeze on the granting of tenure. A new faculty handbook promulgated the next year by the administration and board without any discernible faculty involvement deleted references to the 1940 'Statement' and was silent as to procedural safeguards in cases of dismissal for cause. It indicated that the tenure freeze would continue in effect so long as the college remained in an exigent condition. One year later, however, with the issuance of the 1991-92 edition of the faculty handbook, the faculty simply was informed that 'the College does not grant tenure.' Although in the judgment of!

the investigating committee the

Members of the faculty have charged President Spellmann with having undermined that sense of community which is essential to the health and well-being of an academic institution. Faculty members who spoke to the committee referred to a widespread perception that anyone speaking against the president's policies and actions is in danger of being made a target of retribution. The committee concluded that the climate for faculty members at Lindenwood College is hostile to academic freedom.

The investigating committee found that the administration imposes limitations on the professional and personal autonomy of faculty members that are at odds with the spirit of an

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Members of the faculty have been unsuccessful in their efforts to convey to the board of directors their concerns over the erosion of faculty rights and the breakdown in normal governance patterns and to seek the board's assistance in restoring the faculty to what the investigating committee considers its proper position in the college's governance structure. At Lindenwood College, the investigating committee found, the board has been unwavering in its support of President Spellmann and conspicuous in its unresponsiveness to faculty conditions.

In sum, the investigating committee concluded that current conditions for academic government at Lindenwood College are truly deplorable. The committee attributed responsibility for this state of affairs overwhelmingly to President Spellmann, but it also assigned some measure of responsibility to the college's board of directors for failing to provide the responsible oversight that is called for under the 'Statement on Government.'

Committee T on College and University Government recommends to the Association's Eightieth Annual Meeting that Lindenwood College be sanctioned for substantial non-compliance with generally accepted standards of academic government.

The recommendation, with which the Council concurred, was adopted by the Annual Meeting.

Date imposed: 1994

Truly deplorable.

elvis

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