

All Faculty Letter from the Foothill Academic Senate Mediation Team

Kathryn Maurer <maurerkathryn@fhda.edu>

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To: Kathryn Maurer <maurerkathryn@fhda.edu>

Dear Foothill Faculty,

Please see below a letter to all Foothill faculty co-authored by all ten members of the Academic Senate "Extended Leadership" Mediation Team.

Sincerely,

Kathryn

Kathryn Maurer, PhD.

Anthropology Instructor / Academic Senate President

Foothill College

email is the best way to contact

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she/her/hers

Dear Colleagues,

We are writing to you as the senate-appointed team to the mediation effort between the Foothill Academic Senate and Foothill College President Thuy Nguyen to share some unfortunate developments that occurred last week in the relationship between the senate and President Nguyen. It pains us to report to you that the formal mediation between the Foothill Academic Senate and President Nguyen has broken down completely.

To review, the "mediation effort" was one of nine bundled strategies proposed by the senate last spring to address the serious and growing concerns being brought forward by Foothill faculty to the senate. This letter documented a pattern under President Nguyen's administration of faculty input into important decisions on campus being ignored or never heard, even on matters for which state law and regulations along with FHDA Board Policy requires the college to consult with the academic senate.

In mid-May, President Nguyen contracted Mr. Wally Anderson as mediator. Despite this mediation team's willingness to come to the table even during the summer months, the mediation process experienced many delays including: repeated delays scheduling meetings with President Nguyen and her cabinet; the unilateral withdrawal and subsequent return to mediation by President Nguyen; unproductive sessions of one-on-one mediation between President Nguyen and Academic Senate President Maurer that the mediator had to pause due to concerns that the mediation might be leading to an increasingly deteriorating relationship; and, finally, repeated failed attempts by the mediator to get President Nguyen to share her objectives and desired outcomes of the mediation, moving him to engage Chancellor Miner in ordering President Nguyen to comply, which she finally did on September 27.

On September 30 Mr. Anderson withdrew from the mediation process, citing that little, if any, progress had been made given that the objectives and expected outcomes of the parties are incompatible. On October 1 President Nguyen requested to re-engage the mediator and the academic senate in mediation, and shared with us a document containing her mediation objectives which she stated were not, in her mind, incompatible with the senate's. Despite this request to re-engage, we are unanimous in

our agreement with the mediator's conclusion, and do not see a path forward given the past actions and present words of President Nguyen.

We find the delays in moving this forward and, even more importantly, the timing of President Nguyen's sudden display of investment in this process, after months of attempts for us to move forward, as confusing, erratic and most importantly not conducive to building trust that is essential for successful mediation. Furthermore, upon review of President Nguyen's objectives document, the Senate mediation team is even more steadfast in our position that it would not be productive to restart mediation. The objectives document puts forth a narrative of the conflict between the Senate and President Nguyen that we, the mediation team, reject as unsubstantiated, false, and insulting. In this document, we find the implication that our college and our students would be better off if the faculty's roles and responsibilities in college governance and decision-making were reduced absurd and categorically unacceptable. As faculty, we are engaged in the work of teaching and supporting students every day, and our input on academic and professional matters is essential to the success of students and the mission of Foothill College.

As a faculty, collectively and individually, we now stand on a precipice. We are going to have to decide how to address President Nguyen's problematic narrative and attacks on the foundational principles of our college and its learning environment. These will be the conversations the senate must address in the days and weeks to come. We urge you, the Foothill College faculty, no matter your position on this issue, to engage in this conversation, and let your voice be heard.

Sincerely,

The Foothill Academic Senate "Extended Leadership" Mediation Team:

Kathryn Maurer, President

Paul Starer, Executive Vice President

Eric Kuehnl, Vice President of Curriculum

Robert Cormia, Secretary/Treasurer

Jordan Fong, Senator

Ellen Judd, Senator

Voltaire Villaneva, Senator

John Fox, Faculty Association Representative to the Academic Senate

Laura Gamez, Senate-appointed faculty representative

Rosa Ngueyn, Senate-appointed faculty representative