Resolution regarding Prof. Johnny Williams, social media use, and academic freedom Aug. 5 2017

At the urging of the Civil Rights Committee in their statement of July 14, 2017 (linked below), United Academics Executive Council endorses the June 2017 actions taken by the American Association of University Professors and of the local Trinity College chapter of AAUP (linked below). Both released statements criticizing the Trinity College administration’s response when faced with public controversies about a statement on social media by Trinity faculty member Dr. Johnny Williams, and urged Trinity College President Joanne Berger-Sweeney to immediately reinstate Dr. Williams to his normal faculty duties.

Briefly, the background is this: in response to a comment he made on Facebook, Dr. Williams and Trinity College were targeted by a conservative group, resulting in numerous threats against him and the College. Trinity’s administration responded by placing Dr. Williams on involuntary administrative leave. In the wake of the AAUP’s actions, the administration of Trinity College acknowledged last month that Professor Johnny Williams’s social media posts “were protected by academic freedom and did not violate Trinity College policies.”

By endorsing the actions taken by the national and local chapters of AAUP, the United Academics Executive Council affirms their support for faculty academic freedom in all media, and calls on academic administrations everywhere to vigorously defend and promote scholarly inquiry and academic freedom — especially in those difficult circumstances when outside political forces exert pressures, sometimes severe, that could curtail that freedom.

Links to background information


Trinity College’s AAUP chapter criticisms of their administration’s actions:

The national AAUP’s letter criticizing Trinity’s administration:

The AAUP’s response to Trinity College’s official statement that “Professor Williams’s actions and words were protected by academic freedom and did not violate Trinity College policies.” https://academeblog.org/2017/07/14/victory-at-trinity/

An update from the national AAUP on the current situation:

An article from The Chronicle on the general situation: http://www.chronicle.com/article/Crashing-the-Academic/240562