

March 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Hoch and the Northern Seminary Board of Trustees:

It has been nearly a month since sixty-six students and alumni reached out to you with concerns and requested action steps regarding the investigation into President Shiell's "bullying and retaliation."<sup>1</sup> While we are encouraged that Dr. Shiell is now on administrative leave, Dr. Bowling is serving as Acting President, and Dr. Fay Quanstrom was willing to meet with us, we are still deeply concerned with much of what is transpiring.

First, language matters in how things are being communicated to the Northern community. The board's emails have not spelled out what Dr. Shiell is being accused of, and using terms like "leadership style" and "management style" does not convey the seriousness of the allegations, which are now public in the Roys Report. The victims who have courageously come forward with their painful stories deserve to hear the leadership of the seminary accurately and truthfully name what has brought us to this point. Very little has been said to address them with care and compassion, to express sorrow about all that has happened, nor to ask what help and support they need at this time. A victim advocate, such as was requested in our initial letter, could have helped mitigate some of this. While we appreciate your legal responsibilities, we are asking you to consider how to best move forward in good relationship with these victims and the concerned student body.

Second, Dr. Shiell must be de-centered in everything that is currently transpiring. This is considered best practice for an organization that is truly interested in caring well for those who have brought forward allegations of harm. The email from the board on February 19 was not at all trauma-informed and in fact actually centered Dr. Shiell, which caused greater pain to victims as well as the larger Northern community. We were most disturbed by this statement in particular: "*To avoid being a distraction from the mission of Northern Seminary and after consultation with the Board, President Bill Shiell has chosen to take a leave of absence for an indefinite period.*" Unfortunately this entire situation is a distraction from the mission of Northern Seminary. This statement makes it seem like Bill is the good guy in all of this instead of the one being accused of behavior that is degrading and dehumanizing.

Finally, we implore the board to act justly and swiftly in this situation. With every passing day we hear from more and more students who are discouraged, feel unsafe, and no longer have confidence that Northern is a place they want to stay if Dr. Shiell remains President. As student leaders of over half of the student body (186, including a small group of alumni), we call on the board to remove Dr. Shiell as President and to not allow him to be at the center of any further

---

<sup>1</sup><https://julieroys.com/northern-seminary-president-shiell-on-leave-after-allegations-bullying-retaliation/>

communications. With only 12 days left in the academic calendar for the winter quarter, many students have expressed uncertainty as to their re-enrollment status for the spring term.

We still believe in the values and mission of Northern Seminary and believe it can once again be a safe place where all people can grow, thrive, and be equipped to be tov leaders for the Kingdom. We pray for Northern's future, for her students, faculty, and staff, the board, and especially for those who have experienced abuse and trauma. We are asking you as a board to do the right thing, and be a board we as students can stand behind.

Sincerely,

Sarah Klingler, 2018 MANT graduate and current DMin student

Justin Charles, 2020 MANT

Karen Smith, 2021 MAWT