



March 2, 2021

Dr. J. Robert Collins
Chair, Board of Trustees
Collin College
3452 Spur 399
Collin Higher Education Center
Room 406
McKinney, Texas 75069

Sent via Electronic Mail (bcollins@collin.edu)

Dear Dr. Collins:

We write in response to your letter of February 24. We appreciate that Collin College has a well-burnished reputation, as is evident from its ability to attract faculty members of high caliber.

That is why we are disappointed in your response. Your institution is currently cutting ties with some of those very faculty members after determining that their ability to teach Collin College students merited their retention. Their roles at the College have been ended because they exercised the rights Collin College purports to—and under the First Amendment must—protect.

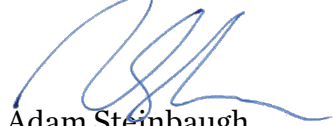
Today, our concerns have been joined by other organizations interested in defending student and faculty expressive rights. The American Association of University Professors wrote in a letter today that the actions taken against Professors Heaslip and Jones were “based on considerations that violated principles of academic freedom widely observed in American higher education,” and “in flagrant disregard of the 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure[.]”¹ Similarly, PEN America observes that Collin College’s leaders “have failed for months to defend the basic free speech rights of their employees.”²

¹ Letter from Mark Criley, Program Officer, Dept. of Academic Freedom, Tenure, and Governance, American Ass’n of Univ. Profs., to H. Neil Matkin, Dist. Pres., Collin College, Mar. 2, 2021, *available at* <https://bit.ly/2NXynpF>.

² Press Release, THIRD PROFESSOR AT TEXAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE EFFECTIVELY FIRED AFTER CRITICIZING SCHOOL’S LEADERSHIP, PEN America (Mar. 2, 2021), <https://pen.org/press-release/third-professor-at-texas-community-college-effectively-fired-after-criticizing-schools-leadership>.

Your letter makes no effort to address our concerns, offering only that you “cannot discuss confidential personnel matters.” Each of the faculty members has submitted privacy waivers authorizing Collin College to speak to FIRE about this matter. The Board’s silence is a choice, not an obligation. Deploying the faculty members’ privacy as a shield serves only to relieve the Board of its duty—under its own policies and the First Amendment—to “vigorously” defend the expressive rights of faculty members.

Sincerely,



Adam Steinbaugh

Director, Individual Rights Defense Program

Cc: Andrew Hardin, Vice Chair, Board of Trustees
Jim Orr, Secretary, Board of Trustees
Dr. Raj Menon, Treasurer, Board of Trustees
Stacy Anne Arias, Place 6, Board of Trustees
Dr. Stacey Donald, Place 3, Board of Trustees
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