

Details of correspondence:

Wednesday April 28:

From: Aaron.Kuecker

Sent: Wednesday, April 28, 2021 11:05 AM

To: Melissa.VandenBout [REDACTED] **Cc:** Julia.Foust <Julia.Foust@trnty.edu>

Subject: Scheduling a meeting

Dear Melissa,

I would like to request a meeting with you early next week to discuss some significant concerns that have been brought to me, and – more broadly – to the Human Resources Office this semester. If possible, I would prefer that the meeting occur in person – as I think that would facilitate clearer communication and not risk difficulty due to technology issues. However, if that is not possible we can work via video. Would you please provide me with your availability next week Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday? I will work to arrange my schedule to accommodate your availability.

I plan to invite Aron Reppmann and Julia Foust to join our conversation. Aron will serve in a support and listening role as Department Chair. Julia (also copied on this email) will function as a third party participant who, as the Director of Human Resources, is responsible to oversee our workplace policies. I will facilitate what I hope can be a frank and open conversation. The purpose of the meeting will be to share directly with you the complaints that have come forward so that you have opportunity to offer a response.

Thank you, Melissa. I look forward to learning about your availability for the early part of next week.

Peace, Aaron

From: *Melissa.VandenBout*

Sent: *Wednesday, April 28, 2021 12:36 PM*

To: *Aaron.Kuecker <Aaron.Kuecker@trnty.edu>* **Subject:** *RE: Scheduling a meeting*

Thank you for bringing this to my attention, Aaron. I'm not available to come to campus, but have no schedule conflicts after 11am on Monday, and am likewise available all day Tuesday and Wednesday. May I suggest we use Zoom rather than Teams? My internet connection means Teams often has lag issues.

In the meantime, I request information about the nature of the complaint and of this process. Please share to the fullest extent allowable by law.

Best,

Melissa

From: Aaron.Kuecker

Sent: Wednesday, April 28, 2021 3:46 PM

To: Melissa.VandenBout [REDACTED] **Subject:** RE: Scheduling a meeting

Melissa,

Thanks for your response and for providing your availability. Let's plan for 2:00 p.m. on Monday using the following Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87559237739?pwd=RXI2eThWTHkzaHMrNEJoMnluMWZ2QT09>

Meeting ID: 875 5923 7739 Passcode: 907745

I am currently in between meetings and wanted to reply quickly with regard to scheduling. I will certainly respond to your request about the nature of the complaint and process in a follow up email first thing tomorrow morning.

Peace, Aaron

From: Melissa.VandenBout
Sent: Wednesday, April 28, 2021 4:03 PM

To: Aaron.Kuecker <Aaron.Kuecker@trnty.edu> **Subject:** RE: Scheduling a meeting

Aaron,

Thank you for the link. We'll see if I sleep between now and then. I have a feeling I'm about to live through another reason why we need a DEI office and dedicated VP.

MVB

Thursday April 29:

From: Aaron.Kuecker
Sent: Thursday, April 29, 2021 6:58 AM
To: Melissa.VandenBout [REDACTED] **Cc:** Julia.Foust <Julia.Foust@trnty.edu>
Subject: RE: Scheduling a meeting

Melissa,

Good morning. I can share with you that the concerns/complaints to which this meeting will offer you an opportunity to respond fall into two categories. They are related to:

1. concerns about professionalism in communication and its impact on the learning environment;
2. concerns about engagement with campus colleagues and its impact on the workplace

environment.

Our meeting Monday is an opportunity for you to respond to these concerns, which is a first step we always take when concerns/complaints are brought forward. No determination about any additional process concerning these issues that are related to either the Faculty Handbook or wider Trinity policies

can or will be determined until after that meeting. It is important that any person about whom a concern/complaint is made be given full opportunity to respond.

Peace,
Aaron _____

From: Aaron.Kuecker
Sent: Thursday, April 29, 2021 5:23 PM
To: Melissa.VandenBout [REDACTED] **Cc:** Julia.Foust <Julia.Foust@trnty.edu>
Subject: Urgent communication
Importance: High

Melissa,

A social media post utilizing vulgarity, from your account, is circulating through the Trinity community. In the course of the last ninety minutes, I have received notes of significant concern from faculty colleagues, staff colleagues, former students, and parents of students. Irrespective of any ideological content intended by the statement, the language itself is offensive and is currently causing active damage to the reputation of our Philosophy Department, to our wider faculty, and to Trinity. Faculty and staff colleagues who are writing to me and calling me are deeply distressed.

Trinity cannot ask employees to take any action with regard to personal social media accounts. It is the case, however, that our Faculty Handbook indicates that our faculty do have special obligation to understand the way their public words can harm their colleagues and our learning community. To that end, at a minimum, I would request that you take down the post in question.

Our meeting set for Monday is intended to provide you opportunity for response to a wider set of concerns that have been brought forward to my office and to the Human Resources Office. Given the current distress caused to our community by this particular social media post, I believe that meeting should happen sooner than Monday. I request that we move our meeting scheduled for Monday to tomorrow, Friday, April 30. Please let me know a time that will work for you and I will clear my schedule.

Sincerely,
Aaron _____