

June 10, 2014

To the Executive Committee:

Last week Martha Horne received from a journalist a copy of a letter signed by the whole faculty and dated after the board meeting. It expressed distrust of the process the board put in place and of us as consultants, because we were selected by the board and because none of us is a person of color. The letter also provided a definitive diagnosis of the problem at EDS: leadership. The letter, we discovered, had been posted on an open Facebook page, EDS Faculty News, that anyone can view, along with copies of other faculty letters and declarations from recent months. We had heard that faculty members have been individually contacting alumni/ae and some bishops to voice their criticisms of the president and the board, but taking these matters beyond the EDS circle to the general public raises the stakes to new and dangerous heights.

Because of the content of the letter and its public posting, we are withdrawing our proposal to conduct a governance assessment at EDS. The faculty has judged in advance our ability to conduct the process fairly and insightfully and has voted unanimously on the conclusion that we should reach. Further, it seems likely that because the faculty has already taken their case against the board, the president and us to the court of public opinion, they would circulate any criticisms of our conduct of the assessment and our findings just as widely. Our professional commitments would prevent any response from us, raising the possibility that the public and the press would be seriously misinformed about our work. That would be damaging to the school as well as to us.

Tony Ruger and Barbara Wheeler are willing to conduct the second part of the proposed project: an analysis of financial and enrollment trends set in the context of developments in theological education more broadly. These may help EDS to develop a financial and program plan that can serve as a guide to discussions of tenure and other important policy matter. Our expertise in these areas is well-established in the public arena, whatever the faculty view, and a report based on quantitative data is not susceptible to the kinds of one-sided representation and misuse that a summary of confidential interviews might be.

Further, Martha and Barbara are willing to continue to consult with the board on an as-needed basis.

We were hopeful that our interviews and governance reflections could provide the basis for the serious engagement between the faculty and the board that the faculty has been seeking. We regret that the faculty letter and its publication make it impossible for us to proceed.

You are welcome to share this letter with the board and the faculty.

Faithfully yours,

Barbara G. Wheeler      Martha M. Horne