



To: President Seligman and Provost Clark
From: Redacted
RE: memos from Provost Clark
Date: December 9, 2016

We write to share our perspective on the tensions that are threatening to decimate the Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences (BCS), and why Provost Clark's recent memos to the BCS faculty have had the effect of tossing gasoline onto glowing embers. The three of us are senior faculty who were involved in creating BCS. We are aware of many of the factors that have made this matter so complex and vexed. We don't know all of the facts, including the reasons why certain decisions were made, but we believe we have a nuanced understanding of the situation. We are aware that there has been a pattern of unfortunate behavior both by Professor Jaeger (this is acknowledged in the summary of the findings of the investigation of the complaint against Prof. Jaeger), and by some of the individuals who made the complaint (as the process unfolded). We are not serving as anyone's advocate, nor are we asking to relitigate the case. Our only agenda is to help our department heal and move forward. We are trying to facilitate this process, but we need the higher administration to, if not support our efforts, at least avoid actions that undermine them.

Our goal here is to address the two recent memos from Provost Clark.

Memo 1 (dated November 29, 2016):

The first memo was the first official response by the administration. The uncompromised praise of Prof. Jaeger, with no balance reflecting that there was problematic behavior, communicated acceptance of such behavior as long as it doesn't violate the rather high bar set by formal policy. That is, the concerns raised in the report resulting from the investigation evidently had no impact on the high regard with which the administration views Prof. Jaeger's contributions to this institution. Should the department conclude that any behavior that doesn't violate formal policy is, in fact, condoned by the administration? Also, the decision to praise Prof. Jaeger without offering any gratitude to those who took the difficult steps of bringing concerns forward increases the likelihood that victims and witnesses of unprofessional behavior will simply "suffer through" and not take steps to rectify the situation. We are terribly concerned about the long term consequences of such decisions. For some, the memo came off as an admonishment to "appreciate Prof. Jaeger and get over it".

The effect was to turn a difficult situation, which we were trying to address, into a full-blown crisis. It would have been better if the memo had never been sent. Minimally, it should have been shown to the College Deans and to our department chair for feedback about whether it might have unintended consequences.

Memo 2 (dated December 5, 2016):

Given the palpable anger and tensions in the department, along with a loss of trust in the university, the minimal response required to enable healing was the following:

1. Expression of concern and disappointment about the findings of “misbehavior”.
2. Recognition of the negative educational impact of such misbehavior on students.
3. Gratitude towards those who brought concerns forward (this was expressed in the summary but not in the memo).

None of that was conveyed in the memo. Rather what was conveyed was regret that the first memo might have been interpreted by some as implying that the Provost was disagreeing with the findings in the summary. As noted above, the anger generated by the first memo was not about that; in fact, most people had not yet read the summary report when that first memo was received.

We sincerely hope that you will interpret what we are saying in the spirit it is intended. The Provost's memos are currently a major obstacle standing in the way of the department beginning to heal; they suggested to some that those with the power to improve our institution simply do not appreciate how damaging misbehavior (including misbehavior that does not rise to the level of violating formal policy) can be to the moral of our faculty and students.