



September 16, 2014

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Dear Chancellor Wise and Members of the Board of Trustees:

We write as elected leaders of the American Sociological Association to express our support for your decision not to hire Dr. Steven G. Salaita as a faculty member at the University of Illinois. Although some sociologists disagree with your decision, as a previous letter indicated, we wanted you to know that some sociologists, including leaders of the American Sociological Association, support your decision. We personally feel if a job candidate openly disparages an entire minority group it is a good reason not to hire him or her as a new faculty member. Dr. Salaita's public expressions of hatred and his public endorsement of violence have no place in the University of Illinois.

We agree with the other officers of the American Sociological Association that it is terribly important that the University of Illinois not abrogate long-established principles of academic freedom of expression. We trust that tenured faculty members will be free to express themselves openly and without fear. As leaders of a scholarly association, we consider it important that decisions about whom to hire, tenure, or terminate be made based on scholarship, teaching, administration, and service, and not on whether people express shared political views of administrators or board members. But if a candidate's views move beyond the political to the hateful, you have the responsibility to the students to refuse to hire that candidate.

Still, it is important that unpopular views on important issues can be expressed. Freedom of speech, even uncivil speech, is vital to the health of our democratic society and to its institutions of higher education. We trust that vigorous debates will remain a vital part of our university tradition.

Sincerely

Barbara J. Risman, Professor and Head  
University of Illinois at Chicago, Sociology  
Vice-President Elect, American Sociological Association

Stephanie A. Bohon, Associate Professor  
University of Tennessee  
Council-Member-At-Large, American Sociological Association