

May 26, 2020

Stephanie G. Adams, Ph.D.  
President  
ASEE American Society for Engineering Education  
1818 N Street, NW Suite 600  
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Dr. Adams,

I've received your message of last Thursday, asking for clarification of an answer I gave during a CNN interview last week, and I'm glad to provide one.

I view each department and individual faculty member as fully credible in their respective fields, and said nothing to the contrary. Addressing the very specific topic of COVID-19 pandemic and the scientifically best ways to deal with it, I said that our "most credible" expertise lay elsewhere, meaning the virologists, epidemiologists, and other natural scientists at Purdue, as well as the experienced physician clinicians we have brought to campus to advise us and shape our policies. Clearly, I maintain a high regard for your department and the people in it, and assume that Purdue's promotion process would not recommend the appointment of anyone unqualified.

When your member's criticism was first reported, I made no comment about it, as I have not on previous such occasions. I would not have bothered to do so but I did not think I should allow a national audience, likely including many current or potential Purdue students and families, to infer that refusal to teach until a vaccine is available was a common or the prevailing attitude among our faculty. To leave that impression would have reflected poorly on your members and her colleagues collectively and on our institution generally.

The vast majority of the reactions the interview generated were highly positive and many noted approvingly that I empathized with the "human" fearfulness of the professor in question, and while disagreeing with her stance about not teaching next fall, twice suggested she "be given the benefit of the doubt." That remains my view about this and all such honest disagreements.

By now, it should be clear that we are working and investing heavily to maximize the safety of Purdue's faculty, staff and any students who may have potential vulnerabilities. Any ideas your membership may have about the most effective ways to accomplish this goal will be most welcome.

Thanks for the opportunity to respond and the courteous nature of the inquiry.

Sincerely,



Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr.  
President