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Dear Colleagues:

I want to share with you the [news](#) that the university and Dr. Jodi O'Brien have reached a mutually acceptable resolution regarding my decision to rescind the contract with Dr. O'Brien to be dean of the Helen Way Klingler College of Arts and Sciences.

In reaching this resolution, we have apologized to Dr. O'Brien for the way in which this was handled and for the upset and unwanted attention that we have caused to this outstanding teacher and scholar. We have also extended our gratitude for the graciousness with which she has addressed the situation these past six weeks.

Now, to you, I also express my regret for the shortcomings and the ways in which this has hurt our Marquette community. Although I stand by my decision, which was made in the context of Marquette's commitment to its mission and identity, the withdrawal of the contract clearly raised anxiety, even anguish, among our faculty, staff and students – and beyond our campus, too. While the Search Committee performed its work exactly as it was asked to do, there followed lapses in communication in the university's procedures. In hindsight, I certainly wish I had asked more questions earlier in the process and worked harder to achieve clarity in my own discussions of the offer. I am sorry that we did not handle things differently, and I assure you that, together with some of your academic colleagues, we are reviewing the procedures for leadership searches and will make improvements.

There has been much speculation – and many accusations – about what this decision involved. It is true that I heard from many individuals, both those supporting and those opposing the appointment. My conversation with Archbishop ListECKI, for example, was like the others: he gave me his thoughts, and at no point did he attempt to tell me what to do. As his own statement correctly pointed out, Marquette is an autonomous institution. No donor, big or small, caused me to make my decision. The decision, as it should be, was ultimately mine alone. I fully recognize that others could reasonably reach a different conclusion, but I needed to act according to both my own conscience and my judgment, based on 14 years as president and my own background as a Jesuit and theologian.

Throughout my tenure as president, I have vigorously defended the academic freedom of various faculty members – in the face of statements from bishops, in support of the breadth of intellectual inquiry that makes a university strong, and in making promotion and tenure decisions. And I will continue to do so. I certainly respect the rights of our faculty to pursue any research in their own fields of expertise, including scholarly investigation of gender, sexuality and identity.

While the events of the past few weeks have raised questions about Marquette's commitment to the LGBT community on campus, sexual orientation was not a factor in my decision. I remain firmly and fully committed to and supportive of the university's efforts to improve faculty and student diversity. Throughout my administration, and with my active support, openly gay faculty and staff have been hired and received promotions and tenure based on academic merit and accomplishments. I want every student, every employee, to be able to proudly declare that this is their Marquette. To that end, we will continue to meet with students,

faculty and staff, both individually and through recognized groups, to elicit feedback and ideas on how we can best achieve that climate.

This is just one element of the community discernment in which we will engage in the year ahead. I am saddened by the divisiveness this decision has caused, and, as I enter my final year as your president, a priority focus will be continuing dialogue and reflection, among faculty, staff and students, about our Catholic, Jesuit identity and the important principles of academic freedom, shared governance and the needs of our LGBT community. I expect us to explore these topics through the research, teaching and service projects that are a part of university life, in ways that include, but certainly are not limited to, faculty summer research, faculty-student team research projects, conferences and speakers, course development, and student service-learning projects, particularly in the areas of gender and sexuality and Catholicity in higher education. I welcome, indeed encourage, your ideas.

In the months ahead there will be much opportunity for continued reflection, in the spirit of St. Ignatius. And I will be asking God's blessings on our Marquette family and His guidance as we move forward.

Sincerely,

Bob Wild, S.J.