

ITEM 4

September 13, 2013

Met w/ Sabina Burton for about an hour, wide range of topics. Talked about where she wanted to go, whether being a department chair was something on her radar, something she'd like to think about doing some day.

We talked about the kind of things that she thought upper administrators would want to see in a faculty member they thought would be an effective chair. That part of the conversation didn't go so well, didn't seem to get through that she was auditioning for the part by the way in which she carries herself and the kinds of demands, reasonable or otherwise, she makes of those in upper administration.

We ended by focusing on the kinds of things she is now doing that she was not involved in before, such as the DRB, being the chair of a search, and so on. I noted that I wanted her to be the model I could point probationary faculty toward, to tell them "this is how you do it."

September 19, 2013

*see item 5*

I received two emails (attached below) from Sabina Burton late on the 18<sup>th</sup>, demanding to know why a second-year faculty member (Rex Reed) was receiving the college Professional Development Award, and requesting that the nomination be withdrawn. She indicated she believed the decision to give the award to Professor Reed and not her “is just another retaliation against me.” Further, she noted “This action just validates my desire to have this matter resolved on a higher level.”

As it turned out, Professor Reed is receiving an Alumni award not the Professional Development Award.

I had a conversation with Sabina this afternoon shortly after lunch, where I showed her that what she claimed was in fact for a different award than she had assumed.

I asked her to try to not sweat the little stuff, to talk to me if she has a concern before committing things to email—most things are simple misunderstandings or result from a lack of complete information.

I also discussed the idea of keeping things at our “local” level more where most of them could be solved easily instead of moving them up the chain.

Sabina was a bit contrite, for her at least. I told her I needed her productivity and drive, she does a lot of great things with students, did the Germany trip last summer—and we need to move beyond what happened before. I asked her to drive a stake in the ground representing August 20<sup>th</sup>, when I started, and to only think about what moved ahead from that, instead of what happened before it.

October 17, 2013

Met with Sabina Burton today regarding her email/grievance sent to the chancellor yesterday.

The conversation was very long, and during it I was able to get Sabina to think a little bit how all this looks to others.

I started the conversation with asking why she was doing this stuff. Didn't she see the changes happening that were to the department's, and her, benefit? Things like changing offices, putting her in charge of a search, supporting her PACCE project, and the like?

She is still very angry about her perceived defamation (her word), and her complaint/grievance to the chancellor was about the Dean's letter to CJ faculty noting that there was no one in the department qualified to do the department chair duties.

Sabina thinks she's qualified for department chair, and much of the conversation centered around whether she truly was qualified. I noted that the chair serves at the Dean's pleasure and asked did she understand what that means. [I have had a bit of trouble in the past using colloquialisms with Sabina, and am careful to ensure I don't do that, or ask if she understands the colloquialism]

She said she understood what "At the Dean's Pleasure" meant, but I explained it anyway, that I am an "at will" employee of the dean in this position and that she may remove me at any time.

I asked Sabina if she had experiences of serving on a real DRB—not what has passed for one in the department for these years—and suggested that her experiences here were not particularly good preparation. I asked what other committees she'd served on, whether she'd served on any university-wide committees, whether she'd ever been involved in a negative decision for a DRB, whether she'd ever had to make a firing decision.

I noted that I felt she had the qualities where some day she would be qualified to be chair, but given her lack of experience in those areas here, asked was she really qualified.

[I think some of this is seeing herself in comparison to Lorne Gibson, who is also not qualified to be chair, but I suspect she probably sees his "candidacy" for interim chair to ultimately reflect on her.]

I also noted that ultimately, since I work for the Dean, the Dean needs to have confidence in me that it is the Dean's agenda that must be supported. I can disagree, argue with her, try to change her mind on something, but in the end, I have to be supportive.

I asked if she felt whether the Dean might have that kind of confidence in her, especially since Sabina did things like send emails direct to the Chancellor. I noted that in all my years as a faculty member, 27 in total, that I had \*never\* sent a complaint email to a dean or provost or chancellor.

I said that had I experienced what she had experienced, I might have felt little alternative other than complaining to higher-ups—but that things are now different. While she may have been nervous about me as interim chair, since Tom Caywood recommended me as his replacement, by now she should have realized I was not the same guy, with the same policies.

I also asked her if she knew the colloquialism “Keep your powder dry.” I noted that the more one files complaints, the less they might be taken seriously by higher-ups.

To finish the conversation, I noted that she needed to demonstrate that she was a team player, someone we can trust, someone who has the background and experience here to be a chair, and those qualities will take some time to demonstrate.

We also talked about what happened in the past a bit, and I reiterated my position that I wasn’t so interested in what happened before, only what we do going forward, and that ultimately, did she understand what it meant when I came here? In other words, Tom’s removal and my replacing him was a tacit if not overt admission that at least some of her complaints were likely valid.

It seemed like I got through a bit. For the first time, I saw a little crack in her demeanor. I suspect I will have to reinforce this several times, but it’s a start.