



UNIL | Université de Lausanne
 Institut de géographie et durabilité
 bâtiment Géopolis bureau 3612
 CH-1015 Lausanne

President Crawford
 Miami University
 501 E. High St.
 Oxford, OH 45056
 United States of America

Lausanne, 26 July 2019

Dear President Crawford,

I write to you today out of concern of a recent decision by your Provost to force out two senior faculty members, Professors Daniel Gladish and John Cinnamon, and to revoke their tenure. In addition, the manager of The Conservatory at Hamilton, Brian Grubb, has been compelled to resign.

As you are likely well aware of this case, and have probably had similar letters on your desk, I will attempt to write something different, from my perspective as a botanist and anthropologist, who has worked in Gabon for 20 years, including for an American botanical garden (Missouri Botanical Garden) which studied iboga.

As a student in American universities (Ohio University and Arizona State University), I had the pleasure to work with a diverse botanical collection in the greenhouses. Although in these cases, I do not remember encountering an iboga plant, I certainly remember seeing other plants with similar qualities from foreign countries, as part of my botanical and ethnobotanical courses. Seeing such plants in a greenhouse collection has a profound impact on a student and makes what they are learning in the classroom, "real". Given that Miami is one of the US's most outstanding undergraduate institutions, I am sure that you would like to ensure that students also have an outstanding botanical education. Given the dubious understanding of whether having an iboga plant is illegal, I hope you would consider that such plants should be worthy of being in research greenhouse collections. Asking a greenhouse curator to resign because they maintain a diverse plant collection places all US research greenhouses at risk and sets a dangerous precedence for others. In fact, it also questions the presence all of the other potentially dangerous plants found growing on the Miami campus (planted or wild) and in your herbarium collection. Will those also be removed?

As a botanist that has legally imported numerous botanical samples into the US for botanical and drug-discovery research, I am well aware not only of the administrative procedures required, but also the technical knowledge required of a botanist. This includes being able to not only identify the plants (or seeds, or other plant parts) they are importing, but knowing the requirements for such importation. However, I am not sure that my colleagues in the social sciences (such as an anthropologist) have the same skill sets or understanding. Most cannot identify plants with a degree of scientific confidence and none would be aware of importation issues, as it is not part of their traditional work or training. In this sense, the

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expectation that an anthropologist like Dr. Cinnamon, should have known about these issues in 2004, really does not hold weight as an argument.

As an anthropologist, first at University College London and now at the University of Lausanne, I have personally seen the cultural importance of the usage of iboga in Gabon. It is a national treasure there, with a positive legal status. Such plants are celebrated by cultures around the world. Although the US Government lists iboga as a Schedule 1 controlled substance, scientific research shows that it attenuates opioid withdrawal. Rather than discouraging anything related to iboga, as the university appears to be doing, it should encourage research into this plant, especially given the opioid crisis in the US and especially the State of Ohio. In Gabon, some Americans seek drug addiction treatment, through using iboga in its cultural context, and with strong, positive results. The Miami student's claim that she would "get high" from such a plant is ill informed, as iboga has the completely opposite effect, and is not used that way at all in Gabon, or by anyone I know, anywhere in the world.

The Miami administration's decision to terminate these employees appears to be unreasonably harsh, overcautious, and insufficiently informed. While an appeal is already in progress for one of the faculty members (the other is on medical leave), and lawsuits are forthcoming, much time, trouble, and public embarrassment to the university could be saved if the administration reverses the decision now. I agree with others that have given public support to this cause, including many colleagues in other universities around the world, that Miami should consider dropping their case against the two professors and the conservatory manager and ask that they be offered the opportunity to return—in their former roles and with their former rights—as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Professor Gretchen Walters