

The Disservice of the University Management

In a letter to the editor (UNT 2007-05-04) Vice-chancellor Anders Hallberg writes that the University protects the work environment. As is clear from the reply of Sten Kaijser (UNT 2007-06-05) the efforts that have been made for the Department of Mathematics did not have the desired result. We wish to describe in which way they on the contrary made the work environment deteriorate further and, not least, led to the loss of three highly esteemed co-workers. The reason that the efforts became so misguided is most easily to be found in the fact that only one side of a conflict was listened to. Allegations about disloyalty and harassment could be used as a tool against a group of employees.

During the Fall 2006, after a new chairman had been appointed, the atmosphere at the department had slowly started to improve. In November the employees were summoned to a staff meeting with the Vice-Chancellor. To their complete surprise the Vice-Chancellor threatens to close down the department and possibly dismiss personnel if the work environment problems are not solved. He regrets that no formal complaints have been filed, and announces that he therefore himself has decided to initiate an investigation of the work environment. Without answering any questions he leaves the meeting.

The work environment inquiry runs for three months interviewing employees. Contrary to what has been asserted (UNT 2007-04-05) notes were taken during these conversations. During the conversations that took place at the Personnel Administration Office, a number of interviewees were assured that no one was “after somebody” and that nobody would be dismissed. However, on February 8 the professors Jöricke and Viro, without being heard, are forced to resign on the basis of what emerged during the interviews.

The interviewers had encouraged irresponsibility by ensuring “you can say whatever you want, it will stay within these walls” and “if we shall need to use anything in a legal context we will of course ask you”. As it turned out the case never went through legal procedures at the University Disciplinary Board and no one was required to stand by his/her statements. These statements were however used, during the meeting with the Vice-Chancellor on February 8, to make Jöricke and Viro to resign. It is not difficult to imagine how badly this has influenced the trust between employees.

The report which was the result of the investigation was presented at the beginning of April. It says nothing about the management's guilt — neither on the department level nor on the faculty level — for the bad work environment. The impression is that the university management first of all defends the chain of command and loyalty upwards and protects the lower management.

Uppsala on June 5, 2007,

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