

*This is the speech I gave at the July 9, 2019 Governing Board meeting. – Tracy Johnston*

At the June 11 Governing Board meeting, I told you my concerns about Dr. Blake's behavior during the hiring process. In an effort to respect my confidentiality pledge, I did not give you any details regarding a specific committee or situation.

At the June 28 special meeting, Trustee Miyamoto brought up my talk, to which Dr. Blake responded, <quote> "People do say things at public comment that aren't true." <unquote> When asked if someone had lied to the public, Dr. Blake said, <quote> "Yeah, they did" <unquote> and, about her behavior on hiring committees, said <quote> "I was there, and other people in the room were there, and they're listening and saying, 'that wasn't true'." <unquote> She mentioned other compliance officers were in the room who could attest to the process. She also said, <quote> "HR has looked into it and has determined it is a non-issue." <unquote> She says she can provide that report to the board.

I have to wonder what Dr. Blake was talking about. Since I didn't specify a particular situation or meeting, how could those "other people" attest to the truth or falsity of my statements? Since HR only allows one compliance officer to be present, how could other compliance officers make statements about the process I reported on?

Also, if HR has "looked into it", whatever that specific "it" happens to be, why wasn't I contacted by HR? No investigation could be considered complete if the person who brought up the concerns wasn't interviewed.

So please, trustees, do ask Dr. Blake for that report, and look at it carefully to see what was done, who was interviewed, and when it was done.

Trustee Miyamoto, you said you wondered if my comments were true or not. That is a fair and understandable statement, and one you should make. I can only point to my reputation as a compliance officer, a reputation that is very important to me simply because I take my job to keep Palomar out of legal trouble very seriously.

My interactions with various hiring committees and HR have been as honest, straightforward, and impartial as I can make them. When something is wrong, I speak up. When committees need guidance, I answer to the best of my ability and seek help when I need it. When things are going right, I stay quiet.

The truth is, when I first encountered Dr. Blake's poor behavior, I went right to HR. I gave them a detailed written report and had several meetings with HR personnel to discuss what I saw and to get guidance on how to handle it. My first thoughts were, "Dr. Blake is new to the process and so just needs some clarification and direction." But those thoughts were swept away by Dr. Blake's own words, when she attested publicly that she was ignoring the process and was proud of it.

The truth is, when I saw other poor behavior, I wrote about it in the notes I take while a compliance officer. There was one deliberation where Dr. Blake did not have poor behavior, and my notes record that, too. Any investigation by HR should include those notes, because HR has them in its possession.

The truth is, other faculty members have reported Dr. Blake's poor behavior to you and to HR. For example, Netta Schroer described how Dr. Blake disregarded faculty opinion and their hundreds of hours of effort during the Psychology hiring process.

The truth is, I have no desire or need to lie to you or anyone else about Dr. Blake's behavior. As I said at the June meeting, Dr. Blake needs to be directed to follow and uphold the rules. I know that if she does, there will be no issues for me to address. My goal is to protect Palomar and ensure fairness in the hiring process.

The truth is, there is another hiring committee situation you need to be aware of. I haven't said anything about it while going through the proper channels in hopes it would be addressed and remedied.

I was the assigned compliance officer for final deliberations. While the committee was gathering, a second compliance officer arrived. She said that Dr. Blake told her I was unable to attend the meeting. While we and the committee chair were trying to sort it out, Dr. Blake arrived. Actually, she walked right by us, told me twice I wasn't going to be the compliance officer, and never slowed down or offered an explanation.

I was abruptly and rudely dismissed from a committee I had been working with for months. My name was listed by HR as the compliance officer and I had made special arrangements to be on campus for that meeting.

I believe Dr. Blake had planned this as retaliation for my challenging her poor behavior during previous deliberations, and for speaking up at Governing Board meetings. It is obvious she planned it: She had arranged in advance for the other compliance officer to attend, and Dr. Norman had known about it when the committee chair contacted her before Dr. Blake arrived.

Dr. Blake has publicly called me a liar. She has sullied my reputation and cast doubt on my ability to do my job. She attempted to publicly humiliate me.

Are slander and retaliation what you want from a college president? I requested a public apology from Dr. Blake through HR, and I think I deserve one.