

This is the speech I gave at the December 11, 2018 Governing Board meeting. – Tracy Johnston

My name is Tracy Johnston and I am a full-time, tenured professor at Palomar College. I started teaching at Palomar 14 years ago.

Part of my shared governance responsibility is serving as a Compliance Officer. This means I observe the hiring process to ensure fairness and consistency for all applicants, and I check that the committee members are complying with the Governing Board's policies and procedures, as well as following state and Federal laws.

Human Resource Services trained me for this position and I have served as a Compliance Officer for about 7 years. I've lost count of the number of committees I have been on, but I think it is over 20.

Last week I witnessed something that concerns me very much.

At the December 3rd Faculty Senate meeting, Dr. Blake came to speak about her attitudes on hiring. She described how she invites the Compliance Officer and the Faculty Observer to participate with her during the president's interviews by asking questions and commenting. She even proposes that more people be invited to attend and participate, as she has an "open door policy." She said this has occurred and she intends to continue it.

This is a direct violation of Governing Board policy AP 7120 and the Faculty Senate Hiring Procedures which state, "The observer may not initiate interaction with the candidates (asking questions or commenting) during or between the interviews." Compliance Officers are also not allowed to participate.

But this is not the biggest concern I have.

Dr. Blake then went on to tell us that she examines the diversity of the applicant pool and the interview list, and compares those to the diversity of the candidates who are forwarded as finalists for hire. She said if she doesn't see that same level of diversity in the finalists, she will be asking the committee "some hard questions" about their choices, including asking about the gender ratio of their department.

Dr. Blake made it clear that her choice for the candidate to hire will be influenced by her perception of the candidates' gender, race, or ethnicity.

Members of the Governing Board, you know the Equal Employment Opportunity laws tell us we cannot discriminate based on a person's race, gender, ethnicity, or other characteristics. In particular, we cannot give preferential treatment to candidates on those bases, either.

The hiring committees can only base their choices on job-related qualifications. In my experience, committees are always very good at adhering to those rules.

Dr. Blake's stated intentions and behavior flagrantly violate the Governing Board policies and state laws, despite Board Policy 2430, which says, "The Superintendent/President shall ensure that all relevant laws and regulations are complied with" and "She is responsible for the execution of policies established by the Governing Board." In fact, she said, "I have violated the process . . . and I see no problem with that."

I am deeply concerned that Dr. Blake is putting Palomar College at risk for legal action. Her stated behaviors and intentions indicate a disregard for Board policy. She is violating state laws. If this continues, Palomar College may be forced into lawsuits.

Thank you for your time and attention.