



Jennifer Boysen >

FW: Official Letter - Call to Action

6 messages

Boysen, Jennie >
To: Jennifer Boysen >

Tue, Nov 1, 2022 at 3:28 PM

Jennifer A. Boysen

Chief Development Officer

NORTHERN Seminary*410 Warrenville Road, Suite 300**Lisle, IL 60532**Phone:* >

From: Boysen, Jennie
Sent: Tuesday, November 1, 2022 3:28 PM
To: Bill Shiell >
Cc: [whoch](#) >; [melody](#) >; Scot McKnight >
Subject: Official Letter - Call to Action

November 1, 2022

Dear Bill,

By way of this letter, I am writing to document my recent encounter with you that left me feeling like working under your leadership is an emotionally unsafe environment. I have copied Board Chair, Wyatt Hoch, and Board Member, Melody Ritter, to this letter. For my own protection and given his extensive professional experience, I have copied Dr. Scot McKnight on this email.

Since I started at Northern Seminary just over three weeks ago, there has been a tension around allowing me access to major donor information. It was told to me that we would work in partnership in major giving conversations, which I welcomed, but that the responsibility for Advancement was on my shoulders. The Board of Trustees were told in the recent fall meeting that my responsibility was to “own” the major giving conversations. I have talked to you several times about needing full access to information and have repeatedly been denied this.

In the one instance where you did introduce me to a major donor, even though I asked you to introduce me to all major donors, I was met with a feeling of hostility from you for following up with her in a phone call. When I shared with you a very detailed account of my call with the donor, in the spirit of transparency, your response to me revealed that there was yet more information about this donor that you had not shared with me. This is information that would have helped move forward the donor conversation, had you shared it with me in advance. I am left with no other reasonable explanation for this other than that this appears to be about having power over me instead of power with me as your partner in development work.

When I confronted you on this matter of donor transparency on Tuesday, October 25th, I was met with a response that did not adequately address my concerns and can be described as lashing out. I explicitly stated that I felt like you were withholding information from me, and you said something along the lines, “Maybe you could start doing some of the things I told you to do and then we can talk about you doing more.” I then asked you what it was I wasn’t doing. You then named several things. I had already done the first steps towards completion on all but one from your list.

I ended up reframing the conversation and shared the problem was that you could not articulate a clear strategy and ask amount for each of the major donors that you were responsible for. During this conversation you also shared that you had relationships with many of these donors before coming to Northern Seminary and it was more of an ongoing pastor relationship. I shared that fundraising best practices are to build relationships with donors to the institution and not just one person—that having just a single relationship is a threat to the donor relationship and our job was to build relationships for Northern Seminary. The donor mentioned in paragraph three of this letter, was not one of these donors. She was someone who has had a long relationship with Northern Seminary and had a relationship with the previous president. Later the same week, you sent me a text message telling me to contact a prospective donor. The tone in which you demanded this felt like a retaliation for me confronting you directly on the concerns I had with our working relationship. Repeatedly, I have been denied access to important information which has led me to believe that you do not want to truly partner with me.

Another example is [REDACTED], a conversation that was started by another member of my team, and who also has at times felt denied access to the very relationship that they brought to the school. This member of the team reports to me and has shared with me his attempts to get you to be more transparent and cooperative. This person has also shared with me how your inability to work with others has led to many people leaving Northern Seminary, specifically those in the Chief Development role. This person also said that if you didn’t make a change, then it would be very bad for the school.

Within a short period of working for Northern Seminary, I have unfortunately learned that there are seven individuals who wish to report anonymously their experiences as victims to your bullying. I am sending this letter not just on my behalf, but on all the victims who have been silenced. In addition to the current employees, there is a long list of past employees willing to come forward to speak on their experiences.

You have given me signs that have heightened my awareness to retaliation. According to the Employee Handbook, the next step is to report my experience to the State of Illinois, Department of Human Rights. I have instructed others to look at the employee handbook and notice that the next step is to file official complaints with the State of Illinois. Another potential avenue is for current and past employees to file a class action lawsuit against you and Northern Seminary for not taking appropriate action for repeated abuses that have been reported appropriately and not addressed.

Members of the Board of Trustees have been aware these abuses, some for years. Please consider this my official documentation of not just my short experience, but for the many voices who are asking to be protected and heard. This is also a call to action for the Board of Trustees to do the only thing that is professionally recognized as appropriate in this

situation—place you on immediate administrative leave and hire a 3rd party to conduct a full investigation of these allegations.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Boysen

Jennifer A. Boysen

Chief Development Officer

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