

September 10, 2018

President Robert L. Barchi
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
Winants Hall
7 College Avenue, 2nd Floor
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

Dear President Barchi:

The American Historical Association expresses deep concern about Rutgers's recent investigation of Professor James Livingston, a faculty member in the university's department of history. The AHA objects to the university investigating and considering sanctions against Professor Livingston for comments made wholly outside of the context of his university employment and extraneous to his role as teacher and historian.

The AHA is the largest association of professional historians in the world. Our almost 12,500 members include college professors, secondary school teachers, advanced students, and public historians working in museums, national parks, and innumerable other venues. The professional standards we articulate and promote are cited frequently inside and outside the academy.

Prominent among those standards is the right of historians to express their opinions as private citizens without fear of institutional discipline. We commend your decision to revisit the initial review and to convene an advisory group of First Amendment scholars and Rutgers faculty to guide that process. We also commend your accompanying statement that "few values are as important to the university as the protection of First Amendment rights—even when the speech we are protecting is insensitive and reckless." And we strongly urge the university not to take any disciplinary action against Professor Livingston in response to his statements.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of the letters 'm', 'B', and 'L' in a stylized, cursive font, followed by a horizontal line.

Mary Beth Norton
President