



THE NEWSGUILD – CWA

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January 31, 2018

Vincent E. Price, President
Office of the President, Duke University
207 Allen Building
Box 90001
Durham, NC 27708

Dear Mr. Price:

On January 10, I wrote to you about the NewsGuild's concerns that Duke University was accepting donations from Heath Freeman, president of Alden Global Capital and member of the Class of 2002. We are in receipt of the university's January 18 response written by Duke Vice President for Public Affairs and Government Relations Michael J. Schoenfeld.

Mr. Schoenfeld's statement that "the university is not affiliated with any of the companies" that I referenced in my letter obscures the responsibility of the university to accept donations consistent with its general mission. Mr. Freeman has played a role in slashing the staff and stripping the assets of Digital First Media newspapers, owned by Alden Global Capital. Receipt of his gift directly contradicts the mission of the DeWitt Wallace Center for Media & Democracy and insults journalists everywhere.

Precedents exist for educational institutions to question the origins of donations. In 2015, the University of Colorado School of Medicine returned a donation from Coca Cola because the gift was part of a larger corporate attempt to cast doubt on the relationship between soft drinks and obesity and therefore conflicted with its educational mission.¹ In 2016, Vanderbilt University returned the 1933 donation from the United Daughters of the Confederacy rather than maintain the word "Confederate" on one of its buildings.² In 2017, the University of Southern California returned a donation from Harvey Weinstein because of his sexual harassment scandal despite that he had not been convicted.³ In each case, the educational institution imposed an *ethical* requirement on the donor that the latter's behavior be consistent with its own mission.

Mr. Schoenfeld's dismissal of the NewsGuild's concerns – "We suggest you address your concerns directly to the corporate officers and directors" – suggests that Duke University finds no conflict between Mr. Freeman's corporate role in the news industry and Professor Adair's goal of holding "power accountable," as he eloquently described the role of the media. News organizations cannot perform their role in a democracy when they are gutted by powerful companies like Alden Global Capital that they should be holding accountable. In your name, Mr. Schoenfeld does a disservice to the mission of Duke University.

¹ <https://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/11/06/university-returns-1-million-grant-to-coca-cola/>

² <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/08/16/vanderbilt-pays-back-donation-daughters-confederacy-so-it-can-remove-confederate>

³ <https://nypost.com/2017/10/10/usc-rejects-5m-donation-from-harvey-weinstein/>

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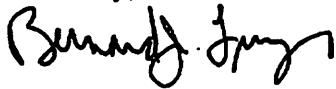
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Your continued cooperation with Mr. Freeman risks damaging the reputation of Duke University. We ask that you request his resignation as Advisory Board Chair at Jewish Life at Duke and that you consider a return of the most recent donation.

On behalf of the 30,000 members of the NewsGuild, I am dismayed by your unwillingness to meet with us to address this important issue. We renew our offer in the event that you reevaluate your position.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bernard J. Lunzer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Bernard J. Lunzer, President
The NewsGuild-CWA

cc: Prof. Bill Adair
Rebecca Simons, Director for Jewish Life at Duke
Likhitha Butchireddygari, Editor, *Duke Chronicle*