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Serving the common good by assuring and advancing the quality of higher learning

December 20, 2006

Dr. Michael J. Offerman, President  
Capella University  
225 S. 6<sup>th</sup> Street, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Minneapolis, MN 55402

Dear Dr. Offerman:

The Commission has received a complaint from Ms. Redacted by HELP Committee, a former student of the University. Ms. Redacted by HELP Comm expressed concern regarding the interaction with her committee, whom she felt were not experts in her particular area of specialization, and with the ultimate outcome of the process, which will not allow her to continue your doctoral education.

As I informed Ms. Redacted by HELP Com, the Commission does not resolve, mediate or otherwise intervene in disputes that arise between individuals and institutions regarding alleged problems that an individual has experienced in his/her relationship with that institution or one of its faculty members. In this particular case, the Commission's complaint policy does not authorize it to step in either to question or review an institution's academic judgment regarding work put forward in qualification for a degree or to review whether the individuals assigned to a particular doctoral committee held sufficiently appropriate specializations. The two individuals whose credentials she included would seem to be at least reasonably qualified as both had doctoral degrees in education. The Commission anticipates that the institution will have an appeals process to consider, where appropriate, cases such as this and the issues they present. In this case, the institution has limited the grounds for appeal so it is not clear whether she can proceed with an appeal based on the issues as she has outlined them or has any satisfactory means to bring her concerns to the attention of administration.

Nevertheless her letter is troubling in light of two other recent complaints to which we may ask for your formal response, provided we receive consent from the complainants to share their materials with you. These complaints, taken as a group, suggest a dissatisfaction on the part of at least some graduate students with the quality of the interaction they have had in the institution's core academic programs and an unwillingness on the part of the institution to review and respond to the potential customer service issues these complaints suggest. I hope that you will review Ms. Redacted by HELP Comm's documents carefully and consider thoughtfully what actions an institution that has publicly indicated its dedication to quality improvement by joining the Commission's AQIP program should take. While I will not be asking for a formal response to this complaint at this time, I or Redacted by HELP Committee may ask you to address some of the concerns identified in this complaint as we ask you in the future to comment on other complaints.

**CAPELLA-0049248**



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I know you appreciate that in receiving and reviewing student complaints, the Commission is not only fulfilling its mission but also working to stimulate improvements among its membership.

Sincerely,  
Redacted by HELP Committee

Assistant Director for Legal and Governmental Affairs

enclosure

**CAPELLA-0049249**