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Assemblyman 105<sup>th</sup> District

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July 2, 2013

Chancellor William Kelly  
Office of the Chancellor  
205 East 42<sup>nd</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10017

Chancellor Kelly:

The University's decision to hire David Petraeus to teach one seminar class a semester for \$150,000 or \$200,000 (the number seems to be fluid) is troubling. The reaction from the University and Petraeus to news coverage of the salary is troubling as well. It appears there may be an attempt to rewrite the facts, misleading New York taxpayers in the process. A pattern of dishonesty around Petraeus is continuing to emerge.

I am writing to ask for an explanation of the University's apparent attempt to re-write the facts about the Petraeus hire. I also ask that the University reconsider hiring Petraeus because celebrity hires do not fit with the mission of a public university. \$150,000 is far too much for a public university to spend on a very part-time adjunct professor.

**Misleading the Public**

The original story broke on Gawker.com yesterday, Monday July 1, 2013, at 11:43am. The story was sourced with emails between Petraeus and the University acquired by a Freedom of Information request. The emails discuss the salary, benefits, and job requirements for the position. The final documentation in the exchange between the University and Petraeus is a March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2013 letter from the Chancellor of the University to Petraeus agreeing to a \$200,000 salary, supplemented by funds from a future private gift. That is the final status of the hiring agreement as provided to the reporter.

In an email time-stamped two-and-a-half hours after the Gawker story was published, the University Vice Chancellor writes to Petraeus to "memorialize" discussions between the University and Petraeus agreeing to a \$150,000 salary, of which Petraeus would donate a portion to charity. The University is telling the public that Petraeus agreed to this different arrangement before the story went public out of the goodness of his heart. However, when the University spokesman spoke with my staff, it became clear that there was no written documentation of this change prior to the publication of the Gawker story. That's strange given the fact that there are numerous back-and-forth emails discussing the salary written before the Gawker story. All of those emails conclude that the salary will be \$200,000 and mention nothing about charitable donations.

It appears that Petraeus and the University are being dishonest with the public in an attempt to save face. Rather than admitting a mistake, they are claiming they never made the mistake. I am skeptical to say the least.

I am formally requesting that the University provide the public with any written documentation to prove the claim that the salary cut came before the public criticism. If that is unavailable, I am asking the University to rescind its offer to Petraeus. A troubling pattern of dishonesty has emerged around him. If there was a cover-up here, Petraeus is not the right fit for the University.

**Celebrity Hires Aren't the Right Way for a Public University to Spend Money**

Whether Petraeus makes \$150,000 or \$200,000, that's far out of line with what a public university should be spending on a part-time professor. The average salary for an adjunct professor at CUNY is \$25,000 per year.

High-priced celebrity hires are not the right fit for a public university. Whether it is \$150,000 or \$200,000 to teach a single class a semester, this is not a good investment. Taxpayers fund CUNY to provide an affordable education for New Yorkers. Paying \$150,000 to David Petraeus to teach a three-credit seminar for two semesters contributes little to an affordable, quality education. Taxpayers and students both deserve better. While Petraeus might offer some glamour, that alone does not fit with the University's mission.

It is also not quite accurate to claim that Petraeus' salary will not be funded by taxpayers. CUNY is a public university. According to the CUNY spokesman, Petraeus will be paid from the University's Research Foundation. However, there are no grants or donations specifically earmarked by donors to pay for Petraeus. That means the salary will come from the Foundation's general funds. Money sources are fungible in a large institution and when CUNY takes funds from one place, it affects other funds, specifically tax dollars and student tuition payments. This hire definitely involves tax dollars and public spending.

I hope the University will provide an explanation of the facts surrounding the Petraeus hire and clear the air. The hiring decision should be reconsidered, especially if there has been an attempt to rewrite facts and mislead the public.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. M. L.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

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