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September 3, 2014

Dear Chancellor Wise:

We are members of English departments from around the world who write, regretfully, to inform you that we will not engage with the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign as speakers, as participants in conferences or other events, or as reviewers for the tenure and promotion of your faculty until you rescind the decision to block Professor Steven Salaita's appointment to the Program in American Indian Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign. Many prominent academics have written eloquently about the chilling effect your decision will have on the free expression of dissident ideas by academics; legal scholars have argued that it is a violation of academic freedom and more fundamentally, freedom of speech.

Diverse and discordant voices, voices that some find "difficult," are key to the survival of our schools as living institutions. Critical thinking of the kind that can lead directly to political dissent is exactly what any faculty in any college or university worthy of the name must teach.

Please reconsider your decision. Until then, we will not engage with a university we otherwise admire in so many ways.

PLEASE NOTE: all institutions listed below are for purposes of identification only. We sign as scholars, not on behalf of the institutions that employ us.

Sincerely,

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