Faculty Senate Meeting
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Thanks.

I’d like to try to clear up some misunderstandings that are driving much of this discussion. I’ll be brief and make only two points.

First, all economics faculty hiring, and decisions on promotion, tenure, termination, and pay-raises - as well as all faculty support with University funds - has been driven exclusively by the economics faculty in accordance professional principles of competitive search and vetting, and all with standard University input and oversight from the office of the Provost and other University administration.

Second, our faculty’s long-standing and unwavering commitment to academic excellence has indeed attracted outside funds. These funds enable us to do better that which we are committed to doing; they in no way direct our research, our teaching, our writing for professional or non-professional audiences, or our mentoring of students.

Our excellence is documented and well-known among economists. According to a 2016 paper in the journal *Applied Economic Letters*, GMU Econ is the number two department in the south. We are behind only Vanderbilt, and ahead of departments at such schools as Duke, Johns Hopkins, UVA, and Virginia Tech.
Worldwide, Shanghai rankings places GMU Econ as 26th in the world - ahead, again, of UVA and Virginia Tech, as well as schools such as Rochester, Carnegie-Mellon, Erasmus, and Brown.

And just in the past few days the Royal Economics Society, one of the oldest and most prestigious organizations of economists in the world, announced that the 2017 Royal Economics Society Prize for the best unsolicited paper published over the past two years in the Economic Journal goes to my colleagues Noel Johnson and Mark Koyama, along with their co-author Robert Warren Anderson, who earned his PhD in economics at GMU. Noel Johnson, by the say, is one of the scholars hired under the agreements at issue today. (The paper is “Jewish Persecutions and Weather Shocks: 1100–1800.”)

Noel, as well as all of the other scholars hired under these agreements, are much-accomplished and have enhanced the prestige not only of GMU Econ but of George Mason University at large. Look at who wrote the letters-of-recommendation for these colleagues when they were being considered for positions here. Look at my colleagues’ publication records - of books and academic articles. Look at their citation counts. Look at their teaching records. Look at their visiting professorships. Look at their honorary degrees. Look at the professional awards that they have won. Look at the doctoral students who worked under them. Look at the job offers that these colleagues of mine have gotten over the years from other universities and research institutions, some of which we successfully matched, others of which we did not.

Look at whatever academic and professional criteria you wish. Parse these criteria however you wish. Compare my colleagues to whomever you wish. You will find only excellence.

And - last but certainly not least - look at the actual work done by my colleagues. Read it for yourselves. Don’t presume to know what this
research is about. Don’t read *about* this research. *Read the research.* I challenge anyone, in this room or out, to find in *any* of that research anything but the highest regard for academic standards and for intellectual integrity, and evidence of a sincere search for truth.

Look at my colleagues, personally and academically, and you will find *nothing* but excellence.

Thank you.