

To: Kilen Gray, LPTS Title IX Coordinator
From: Aimee Moiso, Associate Director, Louisville Institute
Cc: Mary Mitchell, HR Consultant
Filed: December 6, 2023

**Official Complaint of Title IX Violations
Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary and Louisville Institute
December 2023**

This document constitutes an official complaint of discrimination on the basis of sex, which violates the policies of the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary (LPTS) established in compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1972, Title IX of the Educational Amendment of 1972, Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975. See attachment 1 for specific policy language.

I, Aimee Moiso, Associate Director of the Louisville Institute (LI) and employee of the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary (LPTS or “the seminary”), contend that I have been subject to discrimination based on sex/gender bias and stereotyping. The primary examples of this discrimination are exhibited in an employee performance-related letter I received from Edwin Hernández, Executive Director of the Louisville Institute and my supervisor, on November 6, 2023. The letter (attachment 2) articulates his perceptions of our interactions and my behavior during the last week of September 2023. In this complaint, I name the discriminatory gender stereotyping and bias that the letter demonstrates, and describe relevant context, overall patterns, and seminary procedures that contributed to a potentially discriminatory environment.

TITLE IX VIOLATION 1:

My actions and behavior have been interpreted negatively through gender-biased understandings of “appropriate” behavior in the workplace and stereotyped roles of women.¹ I have been expected to display certain stereotypically “feminine” characteristics and behaviors equated with “professionalism,” and am being punished for not performing those behaviors as expected.

A. Biased interpretations of anger and frustration.

First, the November 6 letter describes an expression of “apparent frustration and anger” that took place on September 25, 2023. Specifically, what is stated is that in a meeting I “slammed the table,” which left everyone “stunned” at the “unprofessional” behavior.

This interpretation of what took place is embedded with gender stereotypes of “appropriate” behavior for women. Studies show that expressions of anger by men are not only tolerated in professional spaces, but can increase male influence, authority, and power. When women, however, express frustration or anger in the workplace, they are viewed as “irrational,” “volatile,” and “overly-emotional,” and their expressions are judged more harshly and more often lead to

¹ Throughout this document I use the terms “women” and “men” in relationship to gender stereotypes and bias. This language may seem unnecessarily binary and exclusive of other gender expressions, but I am using it to articulate the heteronormative and patriarchal stereotypes and bias that form the basis of my complaint. They are not meant to convey exclusion of nonbinary gender expressions; in fact, many of the biases articulated here apply to all forms of gender expression that do not conform to social or cultural expectations.

explicit or implicit punishment.² Expressions of anger by women in the workplace are also stereotypically attributed to “internal motivation” — that is, to a lack of internal self-control or rationality — rather than caused by the situation or context in which the anger is expressed.³ In other words, displays of anger from women are attributed to personal deficiencies or deviance from social expectations. By contrast, anger displayed by a man is often attributed to external factors rather than to his character.

The November 6 letter makes plain that these gender stereotypes are being employed in the interpretation of my anger. The letter dismisses the anger without any attention to possible causes. Instead, the implied problem is a loss of control on my part. The language of the letter also exaggerates the action to make it sound dramatic and volatile; the words “slamming” and “stunned” suggest aggressive or even dangerous behavior.

In fact, what took place was that after I had been interrupted multiple times while speaking, I slapped the palm of my hand on the table out of frustration at not being heard. Questions and concerns raised by women in the workplace are frequently dismissed or taken less seriously than those raised by men, especially when those questions are perceived as a challenge or critique.⁴ In this situation, it was precisely *because* my questions and concerns were not being heard that I expressed anger and frustration. This context is omitted in the interpretation of my actions. My anger and frustration are seen as “unprofessional” at the same time my professional questions and statements are being interrupted and going unaddressed.

Finally, nearly everyone to whom I have recounted this story has immediately mentioned that as a woman my anger was likely seen as a violation of gender norms. Almost to a person, the comment I have heard from colleagues has been, “And of course because you’re a woman, you’re not supposed to get angry or frustrated.” This anecdotal evidence reiterates that my supervisor’s reaction to my anger is based in commonly-known gender stereotyping.

B. Expectations of stereotypically “feminine” personality traits and styles.

Studies show that women in the workplace “are expected to be kinder and more modest than men,”⁵ and are associated with the sympathetic treatment of others, such as “being affectionate, helpful, friendly, kind, and sympathetic, as well as interpersonally sensitive, gentle, and soft-spoken.”⁶ Women are expected to demonstrate “communal” traits, like being accommodating,

² See Jessica M. Salerno and Liana C. Peter-Hagene, “One Angry Woman: Anger Expression Increases Influence for Men, but Decreases Influence for Women during Group Deliberation,” *Law and Human Behavior* 39, no. 6 (December 2015): 581–92; Victoria L. Brescoll and Eric Luis Uhlmann, “Can an Angry Woman Get Ahead?: Status Conferral, Gender, and Expression of Emotion in the Workplace,” *Psychological Science* 19, no. 3 (March 1, 2008): 268–75; and Christopher K. Marshburn et al., “Workplace Anger Costs Women Irrespective of Race,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 11 (November 6, 2020).

³ Brescoll and Uhlmann, “Can an Angry Woman Get Ahead?”

⁴ Linda L. Carli, “Social Influence and Gender,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Social Influence*, ed. Stephen G. Harkins, Kipling D. Williams, and Jerry Burger (Oxford University Press, 2017), 33–52. For example, women — but not men — are seen as less likable when they critique or disagree with others, or when they are perceived as being highly competent, especially in traditionally male-dominated roles (Carli, 35).

⁵ Brescoll and Uhlmann, “Can an Angry Woman Get Ahead?,” 268.

⁶ Naznin Tabassum and Bhabani Shankar Nayak, “Gender Stereotypes and their Impact on Women’s Career Progressions from a Managerial Perspective,” *IIM Kozhikode Society & Management Review* 10, no. 2 (July 1, 2021): 193.

selfless, collegial, deferential, and patient. Men, by contrast, are expected to show “agentic competence,” such as being decisive, direct, independent, assertive, and confident.⁷ When women demonstrate agentic traits, however, they are often seen as “unlikeable,” “unhelpful” or even “mean.”⁸ Researchers describe this as a “double-bind” for women; they are punished when they demonstrate qualities that are more stereotypically “masculine,” (e.g., they receive poorer performance evaluations or are passed over for promotions). At the same time, women who display stereotypically female behaviors such as self-sacrifice or sensitivity are seen as appropriate and warm, but less competent — especially for leadership.⁹

Women who behave in counterstereotypical ways and violate gender expectations often receive negative reactions from those around them.¹⁰ “Stereotype-based backlash” is one such reaction, in which justification is found to expressly derogate the woman in response to her counterstereotypical behavior. One study notes, “In typical workplace situations in which a woman has expressed anger, there is probably enough ambiguity about the reason for her anger that some basis for derogation can be found.”¹¹ I believe this quotation aptly describes my situation: my demonstration of anger and frustration on September 25 did not indicate to my supervisor the significance of the issue about which I was frustrated, but was immediately interpreted as personal, unprofessional behavior based on losing control and being inappropriately “emotional” — stereotyped behaviors of women. Backlash in the form of reprimand, rather than respect for my concerns, was the resulting action.

Throughout the November 6 letter, my actions are described in overly negative ways. For example, asking questions in a September 22 email was “undermining,” (though the questions themselves were “understandable”). I articulated in that email that I was unsure about the appropriate place to raise my questions and was happy to direct them elsewhere. But a negative and personal motive behind my questions had already been assumed — that I was seeking to discredit or “undermine” the executive director. Thus my email was deemed unprofessional and inappropriate. Herein lies another gendered bias: women who publicly assert opinions or raise concerns are presumed to be acting “out of bounds,” regardless of the validity of their questions, and are punished for doing so.

C. Expectations of stereotypically “feminine” deference and apologizing.

Women and others of lower social status are expected to show deference to those in more dominant positions in the workplace, and are penalized when they do not meet that expectation.¹² Also, conciliatory action or “being nice” is stereotypically seen as the responsibility of women. Notably, the November 6 letter mentions “apologizing” five separate times, specifically if and when I apologized, for what, and whether or not the apology was accompanied by further action (negative or positive). In other words, the letter implies that particular concessions were expected

⁷ Laurie A. Rudman and Peter Glick, “Prescriptive Gender Stereotypes and Backlash toward Agentic Women,” *Journal of Social Issues* 57, no. 4 (Win 2001): 744–45.

⁸ Pragma Agarwal, “Not Very Likeable: Here Is How Bias Is Affecting Women Leaders,” *Forbes*, accessed November 18, 2023, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/pragyaagarwaleurope/2018/10/23/not-very-likeable-here-is-how-bias-is-affecting-women-leaders/>.

⁹ Agarwal.

¹⁰ Rudman and Glick, “Prescriptive Gender Stereotypes and Backlash toward Agentic Women.”

¹¹ Brescoll and Uhlmann, “Can an Angry Woman Get Ahead?,” 268.

¹² Rudman and Glick, “Prescriptive Gender Stereotypes and Backlash toward Agentic Women,” 744.

from me as a sign of my professionalism, while larger context — such as the factors causing my frustrations, or the importance of my concerns — is omitted.¹³

The letter also references a particular apology twice in the first paragraph: “I appreciated receiving the apology note that you sent on Friday, which I had asked for, affirming the constructive nature of the conversation, indicating your apology, and taking responsibility for your previous behavior.” In actuality, I was not asked for an apology following this conversation; I was simply asked to share how I felt about it. Though the response I sent did state that I was sorry “for the misunderstanding that transpired between us,” the email’s intention was to continue to resolve those misunderstandings, which the bulk of the email addresses. This overemphasis on apologizing demonstrates stereotypical expectations of deference and appeasement from women.

D. Questioning competence when stereotypically “feminine” characteristics are not displayed.

Finally, the November 6 letter implies that I lack professional understanding and competence. Language that emphasizes “the gravity of the situation” and that it is “essential to comprehend that the actions you have taken” suggests that I do not take my professional conduct seriously and do not understand what constitutes professional behavior, while also threatening disciplinary action if I do not agree with and acquiesce to what has been asserted. A common expression of gender bias is to question the competence and intelligence of women who disagree with or criticize colleagues (especially supervisors), or who otherwise behave in counterstereotypical ways.

TITLE IX VIOLATION 2:

I have been subjected to presumed organizational and professional culture and protocols that reinforce gendered forms of hierarchy, support gender-biased explanations of behavior, and privilege the interpretations of a male supervisor over those of a female employee.

A. Presumed organizational hierarchy that seeks to limit open communication, which reinforces gender bias.

What is perceived as appropriate workplace behavior is often determined by unspoken understandings of what is “right” or “wrong” in a given situation, which is in turn based on cultural and organizational norms.¹⁴ Differing understandings of organizational culture can exacerbate gender stereotyping and biases, especially in situations where expectations and procedures are unclear or undefined.

In the November 6 letter, my actions are interpreted in expressly negative ways based largely on assumed cultural norms. For example, the letter claims that when I copied the LPTS president and

¹³ This is an example of a *prescriptive gender stereotype*, when a stereotype does not just indicate what behavior is appropriate, but what behavior should be *required*. In another more recent incident, I was told by the executive director that the fact that I had not responded promptly to a follow-up email he had sent me suggested disrespect on my part, despite the fact that he was aware I was in the middle of preparing for an imminent major event for which I had primary responsibility. See Linda Carli, “Social Influence and Gender,” in *Oxford Handbook of Social Influence*, 2017, 35.

¹⁴ Studies show that when interpersonal problems occur in a workplace, “the organizational culture — who we are, how we act, what is right — will provide only a certain realm of behavioral responses”; that is, the culture within an organization “can contribute to gender inequalities because culture constrains people’s ideas of what is possible: their strategies of action.” (Cailin Starnski and Leanne Son Hing, “Gender Inequalities in the Workplace: The Effects of Organizational Structures, Processes, Practices, and Decision Makers’ Sexism,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 6 (2015): 7).

CFO in a September 22 email asking clarifying questions about salary budget numbers, I “overstepped boundaries” and “bypassed the established protocols of leadership.” This suggests that I disrupted an unspoken but presumed hierarchy and organizational culture into which I should not have spoken openly — in fact, the letter states that my actions had “undermined” what had previously been accomplished in conversation with these leaders. This is not my understanding of the broader organizational processes in which we had been engaged, or the actual facts of what transpired. Previously, I had been encouraged to speak openly with the seminary president and CFO in order to build strong relationships between LPTS and LI, and had been in touch with both of them related to budgeting. My email did not undermine agreements related to salaries; as far as I know no changes were made to the agreements, nor did my email ask for any changes.

Instead, I believe my email was received as a direct and personal challenge by my supervisor because it was addressed to other administrators and included his supervisor (the president). In my supervisor’s eyes, my desire to share my concerns with others “above” him in the organizational hierarchy was out of bounds, regardless of my ongoing discussions with those individuals or my sense of their shared responsibility in the larger conversation. The nature of the email is important, too: I politely and professionally asked for clarification and understanding because of concerns I had about justice and equity in how Louisville Institute salaries had been established (in fact, I was questioning whether my salary and the executive director’s were too *high* and others too low). This email need not have been interpreted as a threat or even a criticism; it could have been received as an opportunity for constructive dialogue about appropriate compensation and equity, or even a chance to correct misunderstandings. Instead, the November 6 letter interprets my email as an undermining and unprofessional violation of *how things should be*. This suggests a largely personal reaction of my supervisor to feeling challenged and called to account, hidden under the guise of boundaries and protocol. It is another example of how gender bias can emerge in response to women who do not explicitly reinforce the status of male supervisors or who demonstrate agency when voicing professional concerns.

B. Negative assumptions and unequal judgments about behavior based on hierarchy and gender bias.

On September 28, I was called to a meeting with the LPTS president and my supervisor to be reprimanded for slapping my hand on the table out of frustration. Beforehand, I had only a general understanding of this meeting’s purpose; I had been told that we would be “debriefing” my “expression of anger and frustration” (the hand slap itself was not mentioned). During the meeting, in response to a question about why I had been frustrated, I raised concerns about my supervisor’s conduct. In the November 6 letter, these concerns are deemed “inappropriate,” “insubordinate,” and “unprofessional,” primarily because I had named them in front of the president. Notably, however, it had not been a problem to raise concerns about *my* performance in front of the president. Thus because of presumed hierarchy, sharing professional concerns with the president is fine when exhibited by a male supervisor, but inappropriate and unprofessional when exhibited by a subordinate, female employee.

Another related example from the November 6 letter is the accusation that I contacted LI advisory board members to discuss concerns about LI’s leadership. Because I do not know in full what this accusation entails, I can only respond in general terms, but I first note that it is common for me to be in conversation with board members. Recently, for example, a board member contacted me to ask my opinion about an upcoming board meeting, which was unsurprising since for more than a

year I have had a significant role in planning and leading those meetings. Further, in conversation with other colleagues — including at LPTS and Lilly Endowment — I have been asked about the role of the advisory board and whether board members might offer guidance about my concerns. According to the November 6 letter, however, actions I have taken to seek guidance or discuss concerns were perceived as wholly unacceptable and even transgressive. In alignment with gender stereotypes I have already named, my actions are interpreted negatively: because I spoke with board members I am described as “undermining” rather than direct or straightforward; my actions are seen as “insubordinate” rather than proactive or problem-solving.

C. Unclear or inadequate HR policies that exacerbate the potential for gender bias.

Organizational cultures are not necessarily inherently biased, but our society is steeped in historical gender, racial, sexual, and other forms of inequity. Human Resource policies, hiring, and evaluations must be intentionally designed to reduce bias and create more fair and just organizational cultures. For example, discrimination in performance evaluations can be reduced by HR policies that utilize “reliable measures based on explicit objective performance expectations and apply these practices consistently across all worker evaluations.”¹⁵

When I first received the November 6 letter, I requested definitions of “undermining,” “insubordinate,” and “unprofessional,” as these words were being applied to my behaviors, in order to understand more fully how I was being evaluated. The response I received was that “The examples provided in the letter are the best way to understand the definition of those words. They have also been confirmed by the President, HR director, and outside leadership experts I have consulted.”¹⁶ This response suggests that there is a presumed and transparent set of performance expectations that do not need further explanation, and that the descriptions given by the letter’s author should be sufficient. Yet the letter’s unilateral interpretation about what is “appropriate” or “professional” is riddled with gender bias, and does not provide “reliable measures based on explicit objective performance expectations” applied consistently across all worker evaluations.¹⁷

Moreover, the November 6 letter emerges out of a reality that is only mentioned in passing in the letter itself: that for some time I have been concerned about our office dynamics and leadership. This context requires further examination. Under current LPTS HR policies, employees are evaluated by and accountable to their supervisors. In the case of LI, the executive director is supervised by the LPTS president, but is also evaluated informally by the LI advisory board. Because the work of the Louisville Institute is distinct from other operations at LPTS, it is unclear how the LI executive director is to be assessed by either the president or the advisory board, since neither is directly involved in the day-to-day work of the Louisville Institute.

Meanwhile, the process for dealing with employee issues outlined in the LPTS employee manual is oriented toward conflict or disagreement. It describes situations in which a supervisor and employee cannot come to resolution, and so they jointly bring the conflict to the supervisor’s

¹⁵ Stamarski and Son Hing, 12.

¹⁶ Email from Edwin Hernández, November 7, 2023. Notably, up until this point in my career I have only ever received exemplary performance evaluations in every job I have held, including more than two years in my current role at the Louisville Institute.

¹⁷ “When HR policies do not rely on objective criteria, and the context for evaluation is ambiguous, organizational decision makers will draw on gender (and other) stereotypes to fill in the blanks when evaluating candidates (Heilman, 1995, 2001).” Stamarski and Son Hing, “Gender Inequalities in the Workplace,” 12.

supervisor.¹⁸ What is not clear, however, is how an employee might raise concerns about a supervisor's performance, especially if a supervisor is resistant to hearing those concerns or is defensive about what is being said. This ambiguity is specifically problematic here, because efforts I have made to raise concerns have not been fully heard or taken seriously, and/or have been seen as insubordinate. This lack of clarity can serve to reinforce hierarchical organizational norms that exacerbate gender bias and stereotyping, as well as gender-based punitive or retaliatory responses — all of which I see happening in this case.

TITLE IX VIOLATION 3:

Louisville Institute employees have been subjected to “ambivalent sexism” in the workplace, which is expressed in both “hostile” and “benevolent” sexism.

Ambivalent sexism theory holds that sexism is multidimensional and can include various attitudes toward women at the same time. Two primary forms are “hostile” and “benevolent” sexism, and they are often demonstrated simultaneously. Generally speaking, those who carry hostile sexist beliefs see women as a threat to their power, and thus hold other negative gender stereotypes about women such as that they can be overly emotional or manipulative. Benevolent sexism holds generally positive views of women, but only when women occupy traditionally feminine roles such as caregiving, support, and deference. Importantly,

“...hostile and benevolent sexism tend to go hand-in-hand... Ambivalent sexists reconcile their potentially contradictory attitudes about women by acting hostile toward women whom they believe are trying to steal men's power (e.g., feminists, professionals who show competence) and by acting benevolently toward traditional women (e.g., homemakers) who reinforce conventional gender relations and who serve men.”¹⁹

A tone of ambivalent sexism has been unmistakable at the Louisville Institute in recent months. In our five-person office, the executive director is male and the other four staff members are female. As the executive director felt increasingly uncomfortable with some female staff who have been direct and agentic in communication with him, he intentionally limited contact with those staff and instead directed his attention to the female staff person most aligned with traditional (stereotypical) feminine traits. Specifically, over the past couple of months the executive director: avoided conversation or contact with those he felt were critiquing him; kept regular one on one meetings with one staff member while canceling, shortening, or not rescheduling meetings with others; pretended to be competent or didn't voice questions at staff meetings out of fear of being seen as inadequate; confided in and leaned on the staff member most likely to assist him without question; and at times avoided the office entirely. These behaviors have been obvious to the whole staff, and some have been acknowledged openly by the executive director.

Because of dynamics like these, in late October three of the four female LI staff members (one was traveling) asked for a meeting with the executive director to discuss communication, trust, and other team concerns. This request was refused because, as the executive director later said, he was fearful of being challenged or critiqued in a group setting — despite the fact that this was not the stated purpose of the meeting. Instead, he said he would discuss such things our regular one-on-one meetings, which of course made any collective attention to these dynamics impossible.

¹⁸ See the LPTS Employee Handbook (2020), pages 26-27, “Process for Resolving Employee Issues.”

¹⁹ Stamarski and Son Hing, “Gender Inequalities in the Workplace,” 8.

All of this reveals further gender discrimination present in the November 6 letter. Patterns of communication from the executive director to the staff seem to indicate his fear and intimidation when dealing with female employees who are strong, agentic, and direct, and a sense of ease and comfort with women who are less challenging or assertive. It is notable that the accusations against me in the letter name that I have raised concerns and critiques, but they are seen as “deliberate and persistent attempts to undermine my leadership.” In other words, my concerns and critiques are perceived as both motivation and action designed to “undermine,” rather than as honest responses to legitimate problems. My efforts to address concerns with my supervisor in a straightforward manner, however, have been met with mixed responses — and are frequently remembered very differently by him than by me. While he has occasionally offered brief acknowledgement when I have raised issues, he has rarely demonstrated long-term or comprehensive follow-up, and has generally ignored or avoided dealing with the destructive atmosphere that permeates the office. At one point, he admitted shortcomings and challenges to the whole staff, only to rescind that admission a few weeks later and downplay any problems that had been named.

In truth, the few truly honest and forthright conversations I have had with the executive director about any of these issues have occurred when concerns could no longer be ignored, such as one that took place September 28 directly following the meeting with the president (a meeting not mentioned in the November 6 letter). Put simply, it is only when I have gotten to the point of openly displaying anger and frustration about what is taking place that my concerns have been recognized (though not actually addressed), and is these displays for which I am now being reprimanded and punished.

CONCLUSION

Over the decades, overt displays of sexism in the workplace have decreased, as have instances of direct sexual harassment and misconduct. However, more subtle forms of gender bias continue to pervade professional arenas, especially in the form of gender stereotyping and gender role expectations. I do not claim that the treatment I have received was intentional or unintentional. Gender bias, like other forms of historic discrimination, often happens unconsciously, habitually, or because of the absence of deliberate action to combat it. Whether intentional or unintentional, the discriminatory effects are the same. What is important is that efforts are made to rectify biased practices that are uncovered (both individual and systemic), and to put in place measures to eliminate future stereotyping and discrimination.

The issues I have named are multifaceted, intertwined, and not easily resolved. I hope that the situations and experiences I have articulated in this complaint will be taken seriously, and that Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary and the Louisville Institute will take significant steps for accountability and equity on our campus and beyond.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stacey C. Moiso". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Attachment 1: Relevant Non-Discrimination Policies

The Non-Discrimination Policy of Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary states:

Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary is an equal opportunity employer. It is the policy of the Seminary to comply with all applicable employment laws, and accordingly the Seminary does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (except as religion may be a bona fide occupational qualification for certain positions at the Seminary), sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, veteran status, or disability.

Louisville Seminary has established a policy of treating all students and student applicants equally without regard to ethnic and national background, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, age, or physical disability. This is in compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1972, Title IX of the Educational Amendment of 1972, Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975. (LPTS Employee Handbook (2020), page 25.)

The U.S. Department of Education website states:

Discrimination on the basis of sex is prohibited by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. This includes discrimination based on pregnancy, parental status, and sex stereotypes (such as treating persons differently because they do not conform to sex-role expectations or because they are attracted to or are in relationships with persons of the same sex). (Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/howto.html>)

Under these two policies, discrimination based on sexual stereotypes or sex/gender-role expectations is prohibited at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

November 6, 2023

Aimee Moiso, Ph.D
Associate Director
Louisville Institute
1044 Alta Vista, Rd.
Louisville, KY 40205

Dear Aimee,

I want to acknowledge our conversation from last Thursday where we discussed your frustrations and concerns, and I also shared mine. It was a constructive dialogue, and I appreciate your willingness to address the issues that have arisen. I appreciated receiving the apology note that you sent on Friday, which I had asked for, affirming the constructive nature of the conversation, indicating your apology, and taking responsibility for your previous behavior.

As I mentioned at our meeting, I am committed to addressing the issues between us in a professional and constructive manner. I mentioned involving a coach/facilitator to work with both of us and the entire team on communication, trust-building, and conflict resolution.

At our meeting last week, you did share how frustrations had been building up and provided helpful context to better understand your frustrations and behavior. I appreciated hearing your perspective. I also shared how deeply disappointed I have been by the behaviors you exhibited a few weeks ago, where you displayed unprofessional and undermining behavior. Let me summarize what I shared.

The first example occurred with the email you sent on September 22, 2023, copying the President and CFO. Your questions, while understandable, undermined the extensive process and agreements we had reached to address salary concerns. By copying the President and CFO, you bypassed the established protocols of leadership. I pointed out your overstepping of boundaries in two separate emails on September 23. You did apologize for this misstep in an email on September 23, 2023. A meeting was scheduled for September 25, 2023, with the President and CFO to discuss the contents of the email related to compensation matters.

The second example took place during the meeting on September 25, 2023, with Andrew Pomerville and Theresia Smith. In a moment of apparent frustration and anger, you slammed the table, leaving all of us stunned by this unprofessional behavior. You didn't apologize at the meeting nor afterwards to those present who witnessed your action.

The third occasion arose during our meeting with the President on September 28, 2023, where we aimed to debrief the prior meeting and address the table-slamming incident. During this meeting, you expressed your frustrations over the last year and recent months, and you acknowledged that your behavior was less than ideal. You offered a verbal apology but then, unsolicited, proceeded to outline various issues regarding my performance, questioning my commitment, knowledge, and capacity to lead the Louisville Institute. This was wholly inappropriate, unprofessional, and exhibited insubordinate behavior.

I have recently become aware of additional instances of unprofessional and undermining behavior that I was not aware of. Since our meeting last Thursday, it has come to my attention that you have contacted various advisory board members to share concerns about my leadership. I must admit that I was quite surprised and deeply disheartened upon hearing this. It has left me pondering whether similar outreach has occurred with others. The disclosure of these recent interactions with advisory board members raises significant concerns about our potential to work together, hinting at deliberate and persistent efforts to undermine my leadership.

Accordingly, this letter will be included in your employment record because of the gravity of the situation. It is essential to comprehend that the actions you have taken, as outlined above, are unacceptable and may lead to disciplinary measures, up to and including termination. Consequently, I will be conferring with the president and the HR department to seek counsel and guidance during this pivotal moment.

I still hope that we can find a way to address these issues and move forward.

Sincerely,



Edwin I. Hernández, Ph.D.,
Executive Director
Louisville Institute (louisville-institute.org)

cc: Andrew Pomerville
Kilen Gray