

An Open Letter to Guido Pichini and Governor Corbett
by Angelo Armenti, Jr.
August 31, 2012

“THE PERSONNEL FILE HOAX”

Dear Mr. Pichini and Governor Corbett:

I am writing to alert you and the media to the fact that I recently became the victim of still another PASSHE hoax, this one involving my recent request to view the contents of my official personnel file. The familiar word ‘hoax’ has the following synonyms: ‘trick,’ ‘fraud,’ and ‘deception,’ behaviors which PASSHE employees have eagerly engaged in recently.

Previous PASSHE Hoaxes

- When Kenn Marshall, Chancellor Cavanaugh’s ‘official spokesperson,’ tipped off the media that “PASSHE is conducting an investigative audit” at Cal U, that was a *trick*—a dirty trick.
- The final ‘Audit Report’ itself was a blatant *fraud*, containing ‘rather serious errors of fact, analysis and conclusion,’ as I wrote in my ‘Rebuttal to the Audit Report.’ Most indicative of fraud, however, was the failure of the audit team conducting the ‘investigative audit’ to observe either the BOG-mandated standards for internal *audits*, or the BOG-mandated Administrative Directive for ‘*investigations*.’ Since the required rules of conduct were not followed by the audit team, it seems obvious that PASSHE’s intent in releasing the flawed final ‘Audit Report’ to the media was to defame Cal U and create a pretext for firing its president, a decision that had already been made, but the announcement of which would still require some justification, as I stated in my formal complaint against Chancellor Cavanaugh. The fraudulent final ‘Audit Report’ was based largely on anonymous complaints but, worse than that, those of us who were falsely accused were denied any chance, prior to its release, to know about, much less respond to, the most serious of the false allegations it contained.
- PASSHE used *deception* to suppress my written ‘Rebuttal to the Audit Report.’ When Leo Pandeladis told me the week before I was fired that the “Audit Report” would be released to the media the next day, I thanked him for the heads up and said that I would release my Rebuttal the next day also. He soon called back and said, “We are not going to release the Audit Report at this time.” Instead, they released it the day after my firing, that is, after my computer account had been cut off so that I could no longer release any of my documents.

Request to View Personnel File

On the morning of July 23, 2012, I came unannounced with my attorney to the PASSHE offices at the Dixon University Center in Harrisburg. We announced to the receptionist that we wished to speak with PASSHE Chief Counsel, Leo Pandeladis, for the purpose of viewing the contents of my official personnel file which, I was quite certain, was kept in that building, in or near the office of Chancellor Cavanaugh, the person to whom I reported as president of Cal U.

We were told that Mr. Pandeladis was on a conference call and was, therefore, unavailable.

We agreed to wait.

One hour later Mr. Pandeladis joined us, apologized for our having to wait, and promptly left, saying that he would return after ascertaining the location of my personnel file.

One hour after that, Mr. Pandeladis returned with two other attorneys, Jacqueline Morrow and Michael Ferguson. After saying that his colleagues would meet with us while the search for my personnel file continued, he quickly left the room and did not return.

The meeting with the two attorneys was very cordial and lasted about one hour, during which time they made several phone calls to people “upstairs” in the Dixon Center, including Gary Dent, the Vice Chancellor for HR at PASSHE, whose name was specifically mentioned to us.

By the end of that meeting, which featured a lot of awkward hemming and hawing—and three hours after announcing our presence and the reason for our visit—we were finally informed that, unfortunately, we could not see my personnel file that day. The reason: Because my personnel file was not located at the Dixon Center but, rather, was housed on the Cal U campus, some 200 miles west of Harrisburg. I thought: Does it really take three hours to concoct such a lame story?

On seeing the obvious disbelief on my face, they said that the same situation pertained to the other thirteen PASSHE presidents as well—their personnel files were also housed on their respective campuses. When I challenged this ludicrous statement by saying that I had direct knowledge that my personnel file had previously been kept in or near the Chancellor’s office, they responded that those files had been moved to the campuses about three years earlier.

I remained totally unconvinced, despite the earnestness of their assurances. But not wanting to embarrass the obviously uncomfortable attorneys any further, and after getting convinced after some three hours of game-playing, that the people “upstairs” had no intention of allowing me to view the contents of my personnel file that day, or perhaps any day, we agreed to accept their offer to view my official personnel file on the Cal U campus the next morning. Later that day, at the request of my attorney, they agreed to deliver my personnel file to his office in Pittsburgh.

At 9:30 A.M. the next morning, the courier—a Cal U employee—delivered two large folders of material and watched as I reviewed the contents of each folder page by page. It didn’t take long to learn that the two folders contained, not my personnel file, but rather an accumulation of twenty years’ worth of thank you notes, certificates of appreciation from United Way, Rotary and other civic groups, as well as other memorabilia my office staff had collected since 1992.

A phone call to Attorney Morrow in Harrisburg resulted in new PASSHE assurances, this time that my personnel file was actually located in the *HR Office* at Cal U, and not in the *President’s Office* as originally thought. Regrettably, tsk, tsk, the wrong file had been sent to us.

They were very gracious however in allowing me to take the two folders of mementos with me on the 300-mile ride home from Pittsburgh that day.

Later that day at 6:00 PM, I learned from my attorney that, surprise, my personnel file had actually been located you'll never guess where: in Vice Chancellor Gary Dent's office in the Dixon Center in Harrisburg!

Since May 16, 2012 when I was abruptly fired, without notice or cause, after 20 years of service, I wondered what sort of people I was dealing with. When the terms of PASSHE's standard presidential contract were violated in my case, I wondered if the current leaders of the Board of Governors and the Office of the Chancellor were incompetent, malicious, or both.

Attorney Pandeladis assured me on May 17, 2012 that I had not been fired for cause. But when he then stated that—if I litigated—the “Board of Governors would change its tune and say I had been fired for cause,” I wondered aloud if I was dealing with a bunch of snakes.

It has been more than one month since the PASSHE Personnel File hoax was perpetrated by personnel in the Office of the Chancellor, and I still haven't seen what is in my official personnel file, the very file that would presumably contain whatever “smoking guns” led to my firing.

The only problem is this: I received very positive evaluations from the Cal U Council of Trustees for twenty years in a row. By law and BOG Policy, PASSHE evaluations of a president must begin with an evaluation by the Council of Trustees, based on input from students, alumni and faculty. Those same evaluations also require that a recommendation be made to the Board of Governors by the Chancellor. I have earned positive recommendations from three different Chancellors over the first 19 years of my tenure, but haven't yet seen Chancellor Cavanaugh's evaluation of me for this most recent year.

But I happen to know that Chancellor Cavanaugh told my Trustee Chair, Robert Irely, after my 'annual evaluation meeting' with both men on March 8, 2012, that he was 'leaning toward' recommending my contract renewal.

Mr. Pichini, since the Office of the Chancellor reports to you as BOG Chair, do you intend to hold Chancellor Cavanaugh accountable for the hoax perpetrated on July 23-24, 2012?

Governor Corbett, since the PASSHE Chief Counsel reports to you through your General Counsel, do you intend to hold Mr. Pandeladis accountable for his role in this hoax?

Perhaps the only thing that may move the Board of Governors and Chancellor Cavanaugh to stop their arrogant stonewalling with regard to my personnel file would be a judge's court order.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to put these matters on the public record.



Angelo Armenti, Jr.