

An Open Letter of Concern About the Removal of Executive Dean Rick Van Kooten

We are writing, as faculty members of Indiana University, Bloomington's College of Arts and Sciences, to register our profound concern over the recently announced removal of Rick Van Kooten, who has served with distinction as Executive Dean of the College since 2019.

The announcement of this surprising decision stated that "Rick has helped the College strengthen its research enterprise, elevate its national reputation, and expand opportunities for students and faculty across disciplines. Just as importantly, he has led with deep care for this community and a steadfast commitment to the values that define the liberal arts at IU." We believe that this is a gross understatement. Rick rose from the ranks of the faculty, having served as Chair of the Physics Department and IUB Vice Provost for Research before becoming Executive Dean of the College, and he has always prized both intellectual excellence and real collegiality. And at a time when Indiana University has been beset by real crises of confidence in higher administration, and the College has been inundated with new mandates and faculty review procedures, Rick has retained the respect and confidence of the College faculty.

We write now to express our deep disappointment in the university's decision to remove from leadership a colleague who has drawn from his faculty experience and institutional knowledge to be an excellent leader.

We also write to express our real concern about what this major personnel decision means for the future of the College of Arts and Sciences. Are there plans for the College that have led you to make this change? If so, are they ones that will show "deep care for this community and a steadfast commitment to the values that define the liberal arts at IU?"

We hope that answers to these concerns will soon be forthcoming. Because the College of Arts and Sciences has long been the core of IUB's reputation for excellence, and that excellence has now been placed into question.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey C. Isaac, James H. Rudy Professor of Political Science

Purnima Bose, Professor and Chair, English Department

Lara Kriegel, Walter Professor of History, Professor of English, and Director, Collins Living-Learning Center

Alex Lichtenstein, Professor, Department of History and Chair, American Studies Department

Mark Messier, James H. Rudy and Distinguished Professor and Chair, Physics Department

David P. Polly, Professor and Chair, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences Department

Fabio Rojas, Virginia L. Roberts Professor, Sociology Department

Adam Joaquim Leite, Professor and Chair, Philosophy Department

Natalie Hipple, Professor and Chair, Criminology and Criminal Justice Department

Leah Shopkow, Professor and Chair, History Department

Stacie M. King, Professor and Chair, Anthropology Department

Sarah Imhoff, Professor and Chair, Religious Studies Department; Jay and Jeani
Schottenstein Chair, Borns Jewish Studies Program