

June 23, 2021

The Honorable Kathy Manning
United States House of Representatives
415 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Manning,

I have reviewed your June 14, 2021, letter to Secretary Cardona and wish there would have been an opportunity to speak with you before you sent the letter. Unfortunately, you have restated biased and factually incorrect information taken from sources which has been presented to portray a negative image of Keiser University and myself. There is another perspective on this situation and other information that would be helpful to assess the accuracy of references cited in your letter. In fact, when the facts are presented accurately, I believe you would find that the changes at Webber International University ("WIU") and St. Andrews University ("SAU") have caused each institution to thrive and succeed in their respective Mission Statements.

Your letter expressed concern with changes at SAU and WIU and used statements from others to portray me in a false light. Specifically, the letter mischaracterized my involvement and adopted testimony of an individual with the Century Foundation who salaciously characterized my actions as a "hostile takeover" of these institutions. I assure you this is not the case and I have no position of responsibility at SAU or WIU.

SAU, a branch of WIU had experienced a longstanding financial hardship due to inadequate enrollment and perhaps a lack of innovation. While I knew of the universities, I was approached to gauge my interest in helping. At Keiser University we sympathized with what WIU and SAU were going through. We reflected on their hardship and thought about how we might assist to help the schools maintain their liberal arts heritage while helping them grow to meet the changing demands of students and the workforce.

To address some of the specifics of your letter and the inaccuracies of your constituents and news outlets contained in it, I offer the following:

Board Membership: The information provided to you is simply incorrect where it asserts that since 2018, I have "obtained dominant influence" over SAU by replacing members of the school's board of trustees with "people connected" to me and that I formerly served on the St. Andrews Board of Trustees. The facts are:

- I have never held a seat on the board of trustees at WIU or SAU.
- Keith Wade, President of WIU requested my input regarding potential board members and recommended the names of potential candidates. However, neither Keiser University nor I have any professional relationships with any person whom I have recommended to President Wade.

Contributions: In your letter to Secretary Cardona, you suggest that Everglades College, Inc., the nonprofit entity that owns Keiser University and Everglades University, has invested money into and entered into a

consulting agreement with SAU in an effort to “extract revenue” from the school. Nothing could be further from the truth.

- From 2018-2020, the Board of Trustees of Everglades College, Inc. donated approximately \$11 million USD to WIU to help the university recover from near bankruptcy and failure of the Department of Education Composite Score Ratio. This was done to preserve the legacies of SAU and WIU and ensure the institutions continue to provide vital educational resources to the communities and students they serve.
- Additionally, WIU and Keiser University have entered into consulting agreements whereby WIU and SA collectively pay Keiser University \$200,000 per year. Through these agreements, Keiser University provides WIU and SAU with general support services. This contract **does not** enable Keiser University to exercise control over administrative decisions at WIU or SAU, nor does it “grant improper benefits or shift control over key functions” of these universities to Keiser University.
- Keiser University **does not** share in any revenue earned by SAU or WIU.

Change in Campus Leadership: The hiring of Ellen Bernhardt as interim president at St. Andrews.

- Ellen Bernhardt is an employee of Keiser University, where she once served as Associate Vice Chancellor of Regional Operations.
- In 2019, she was selected by WIU President Wade to become Interim President at SAU as part of the consulting agreement.
- Bernhardt has helped stabilize the financial insecurity at SAU and led the school to a period of renewed growth.
- From my understanding, leadership at WIU/SAU has always intended to hire a fulltime president at SAU.

Enrollment Growth: The suggestion that positive enrollment growth at SAU is somehow negative to the school lacks merit.

- SAU continues offering the liberal arts degrees that defined the university while expanding its degree offerings to include new programs that meet the workforce needs of Scotland County and North Carolina.
- SAU has “fundamentally transformed” itself for the better while maintaining its role as a small liberal arts institution.
- As a result of its growth in enrollment, SAU has strengthened its relationship with the Association of Presbyterian Colleges and Universities and the Presbyterian Church.
- The additional degree offerings that have been added have helped SAU increase its female enrollment from approximately 30 percent to 56 percent in 2019, which is far more reflective of the current workforce and college demographic in the U.S.
- The addition of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) programs at SAU ensures the school remains a viable educational offering for students who are seeking degrees that lead to employment in an ever-changing technology-based workforce.

Program Growth: The suggestion that the addition of new academic programs at St. Andrews has had a detrimental impact on the university also lacks merit.

- The introduction of new academic programs at SAU, including adult education programs, has been a major part of the school’s increased enrollment and has allowed a new

population of students to graduate and fill vital workforce needs in Scotland County and North Carolina.

- The increase in virtual learning offerings at SAU was instrumental to the school's ability to continue offering classes without interruption during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Universities across the country frequently offer new academic programs to ensure they meet the academic needs of students and the workforce needs of employers.

New Campuses: The relationship between Southeastern College and St. Andrews is separate from that of Keiser University.

- As the co-owner of Southeastern College, in consultation with other co-owners, the decision was made to donate space to St. Andrews free of charge to allow them to expand their academic offerings to a new population of students, specifically non-traditional students in the metropolitan communities of Charlotte, N.C., Columbia, S.C., and Charleston, S.C.

Your letter cites testimony from Yan Cao, a Senior Fellow at the Century Foundation, who is on record suggesting that Keiser University is involved in a "hostile takeover" of SAU. As you can see, your characterization of my relationship, and that of Keiser University, with SAU is inaccurate. Keiser University has made every possible effort to assist WIU and SAU to allow these schools to continue serving their students and communities. The growth that SAU has experienced can only be viewed in a positive light as the school has transformed itself by adapting to current market trends and strengthening its role as an economic engine for North Carolina.

With more than 40 years of higher education administration experience, we at Keiser University feel it is our obligation and imperative to assist other educational institutions in delivering high quality education offerings to as many students as possible. While I can understand the concerns of the constituent that you referenced in your letter, I also realize that change can be difficult for some, particularly some involved with an institution that was failing financially. I fully respect your role to advocate for your constituents, but the assertions in your letter are not reflective of what occurred.

I would hope that if you have further questions that we can have a dialogue about them, because my top concerns are for the students at the universities that I am affiliated with and ensuring that they can get a quality education without assertions that repeat mis-statements printed in a newspaper or generated by biased organizations.

I would appreciate the opportunity to sit with you and further discuss this relationship and I will have Mark Lindsay, our representative in Washington, DC, reach out to your staff to schedule a mutually convenient time to speak either virtually or in person. I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,



Arthur Keiser, Chancellor
Keiser University