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From the NU Community for Academic Integrity

Northwestern University No Longer Hiring Former Afghan Military Officer and Diplomat for Global Studies Institute

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On April 14, after six months of faculty and students urging Northwestern University (NU) not to hire U.S. Ret. Lt. Gen. Karl Eikenberry to run the Buffett Institute for Global Studies, NU Provost Dan Linzer announced they had agreed on rescinding the appointment.

Eikenberry's hire, occasioned by last year's \$100 million donation by Roberta "Bertie" Buffett, had startled and troubled many faculty and students. They noted flaws in the search process, Eikenberry's lack of relevant credentials, his commitment to using the humanities to promote U.S. "soft power," and questioned the forceful advocacy for Eikenberry by the Buffett search committee chair and former NU President Henry Bienen, who admitted to the *Daily Northwestern* that Eikenberry was his idea. (Bienen's career consulting for U.S. intelligence components, Boeing, and the Qatar dictatorship -- on whose behalf Bienen initiated NU's Qatar campus -- emblemizes the "military-industrial-academic complex" Senator William Fulbright [denounced in 1967](#), as does the control of NU's Board by trustees tied to Boeing, Caterpillar, and General Dynamics.)

The announcement came as the Associated Student Government (ASG) was preparing to vote on a [resolution urging NU to withdraw the appointment](#), and amid new revelations about [Eikenberry's recent activities on behalf of the Rwandan military](#).

Linzer claimed the hire was derailed in the course of ongoing talks to "assess the conditions" of the Buffett Institute's new hierarchy. At no point did he acknowledge the outpouring of faculty and student protest. Professor Jacqueline Stevens, who co-authored letters opposing the Eikenberry appointment, questioned the integrity of the [opaquely worded statement](#), "What new 'conditions' does Linzer foresee that would make it okay to hire someone who has no peer-reviewed publications, refuses to release his resumé, and has assisted and endorsed as exemplary an authoritarian regime that kills and disappears journalists and dissidents?"

Critics had charged that Eikenberry, a 35-year career military officer and former ambassador to Afghanistan (2009-11), was unqualified to run a research institute, and they rebuffed his stated desire to instrumentalize the humanities and social sciences on behalf of U.S. business and military interests. Jorge Coronado, one of the faculty leaders opposing the Eikenberry appointment, expressed broad faculty concerns: "The Eikenberry appointment represents a gross miscarriage of the University's mission in research and teaching and makes a mockery of the ideal of free inquiry under which a university education should take place."

On April 6, Linzer and the Faculty Senate leadership distributed a hastily prepared one-sided dossier for a motion not distributed in advance and pushed an unprepared Faculty Senate to go on record endorsing the Eikenberry appointment. Efforts to present opposing viewpoints were shouted down.

Immediately after the meeting, Linzer and other administrators and several pro-appointment faculty members packed themselves into the ASG student meeting, the first time students recalled seeing such a spectacle.

Junior Matt Herndon and senior Neha Reddy had co-sponsored the ASG resolution asking NU withdraw the Eikenberry appointment. Herndon said five minutes before the meeting, the ASG President approached and said that "Provost Linzer had asked him to inform [Herndon and Reddy] that it was possible we could be liable for a defamation suit if Ambassador Eikenberry perceived any of the language used in the resolution to be defamatory." Reddy reported this to Stevens, who asked Linzer to specify any portion of the resolution that could be construed as defamatory. Linzer said NU's office of general counsel had told him this and demurred, "I am not a lawyer." Linzer subsequently failed to indicate any such passage or name the lawyer who allegedly told Linzer this, despite repeated inquiries from Stevens and others.

Reddy said, "We were completely unnerved by the thought that any higher-ups at Northwestern could ever think our actions warranted any sort of legal action, for simply expressing a dissenting opinion that fundamentally arose from a place of deeply caring for Buffett and the opportunities for students and faculty in global studies for years to come." Reddy added, "We were especially shaken because this news came right before we had to speak in a room full of students, administrators and faculty."

The campaign to stop the Eikenberry appointment began last fall, when 15 Buffett faculty wrote a letter to the search committee requesting they consider renowned scholars in the humanities and require a public talk. Bienen disregarded these requests. In November, 67 faculty sent a letter to President Morton Schapiro and Linzer objecting to hiring Eikenberry. This, too, was disregarded. In February 2016, 46 faculty signed a public letter affirming their opposition. Reddy and Herndon were aware of these events and also referenced a course by Professor Micaela di Leonardo as influencing their decision to introduce the ASG resolution.

Herndon said Linzer's email described Eikenberry "stepping down as a mutual decision because the necessary pieces weren't in place for him to start at Northwestern." Herndon rejects this, saying he firmly believes that the "decision was a result of faculty and student pressure and activism, letting Northwestern know that Eikenberry is not the person we want leading the Buffett Center."

Faculty and students who have been opposing the appointment are elated by this news and the lessons learned from speaking truth to power. They urge a series of meetings open to faculty and students to develop new search criteria to attract a top-flight scholar who embodies the university's mission in research and teaching, and that the next search be transparent and inclusive. For further details, please see [Eikenberry Dis-Appointment Timeline](#).

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