



Office of the President

December 18, 2017

The Honorable Henry Autrey
United States District Court
Eastern District of Missouri
Thomas F. Eagleton Courthouse
111 South Tenth Street
Room 10.182
St. Louis, MO 63102

Re: United States v. Deborah Pierce
Cause No.: 4:16-cr-00502

Dear Judge Autrey:

It is with sadness and frustration that I write this letter to inform you of the loss that Webster University has sustained due to the illegal activity of its former Director Deborah Pierce. Ms. Pierce's actions have gravely impacted the University in three main areas: financial damage, reputational damage, and institutional relations damage.

Institutional Relations:

Webster University is a higher education global institution with campuses in eight countries and on four continents, in addition to its extended campuses across the U.S. We pride ourselves on meeting our students' unmet needs. Every endeavor in which we embark is to fulfill our mission:

Webster University, a worldwide institution, ensures high quality learning experiences that transform students for global citizenship and individual excellence.

Our partnership began with the government of the People's Republic of China to help fulfill this mission. The Confucius Institute (CI) is a Chinese language and culture program that is funded collaboratively by Webster University and the government of the People's Republic of China. Building this partnership helped to establish Webster University's Confucius Institute, which was the first CI in the state of Missouri. The partnership and programs built throughout the last decade bring Chinese professors to the St. Louis region to teach Chinese to K-12 schools throughout the St. Louis area. These teachers voluntarily teach throughout our region. In 2017, 172 students were enrolled in classes taught by the Confucius Institute. The Confucius Institute also sponsors two Confucius classrooms at local high schools which serves an additional 286 students.

Establishing a trusting relationship with the government of China has taken great effort on both Webster's part and on the part of the Chinese government. We are proud of the relationship where both parties contribute financially to the success and sustainability of the Confucius Institute programs.

As you can imagine, Ms. Pierce's embezzlement of funds has placed into question the integrity of the entire CI program. It has also placed a strain on Webster University and the People's Republic of

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China in trying to determine from which institution's budgets the funds were taken, thus requiring the Chinese Government to enter into the litigation process.

Here at home, we have always had a strong relationship with financial institutions. Ms. Pierce's actions exposed both the University and our financial partner. It placed both institutions in the uncomfortable position of informing its auditors and other governmental compliance agencies. Further auditing processes resulted which was an additional expense to all parties in terms of dollars and personnel.

Reputational Damage:

The damage extends further from institutional relationships to reputational damage both within the University community and to external communities who partner with the University. Both the student newspaper and various St. Louis papers published the Pierce embezzlement. Furthermore, the Confucius Institute and Ms. Pierce was a source of news for all of the major T.V. stations in St. Louis. Webster University strives to bring the accomplishments of its students and faculty to the attention of every community where Webster University is located. Clearly, Ms. Pierce's action overshadowed the University's wonderful work. Often, the public remembers these types of negative stories. It taints and undermines the arduous work in developing a positive reputation.

As you can surmise, it is difficult to place an exact amount of loss in some of these areas. As a result of Ms. Pierce's illegal and unscrupulous activity, we will never know how many students did not apply to our Confucius Institute program. We will never know the loss of potential partnerships with other institutions. Sadly, we will never know the loss of donor contributions due to their concern for the sustainability of the program and the future development of our Asian partnerships.

Financial Damage:

Financially, we have not only lost the funds that Ms. Pierce illegally took (which documents have been submitted to the Court), we have spent over \$52,000.00 in legal fees. We are a non-profit institution. Webster University has the most economically diverse student population in the area. These funds are needed for programs that meet the needs of our students. In addition, Ms. Pierce's activities have taken a great amount of human resources to investigate and audit the damage that her actions have had on this University and its partners.

With all of this in mind, we respectfully request that you consider all of the damage that Ms. Pierce's actions have had on the institution, its students, faculty, and staff of Webster University along with all of Webster University's partners when considering the sentence of Deborah Pierce.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth (Beth) J. Stroble, Ph.D.
President