

A graduate student, Mike Peters sent this unsolicited letter (email) to Barry Spielman, EE Department chair, and the late Dean Grodsky, which characterizes Discher's reputation in the Engineering School.

Mike Peters, at that time was a graduate student in Mechanical Engineering at Washington University and president of the Missouri Gamma chapter of the Tau Beta Pi, (engineering honorary) is also the son of Dr. Peters, Chairman of the Mechanical Engineering Department.

=====

From: "M Peters" <mp1@megalon.wustl.edu

To: <bes@ee.wustl.edu

Subject: An outstanding EE employee

Date: Wed, Jun 28, 2000, 9:04 AM

Dr. Barry Spielman
Chairman Electrical Engineering Department

Dr. Barry Spielman,

As the 1999-2000 president of the Missouri Gamma chapter of the Tau Beta Pi Association , The Engineering Honor Society, I am pleased to inform you about an employee in your department who exemplifies excellence and integrity in engineering, the hallmarking principles of Tau Beta Pi.

In my four years as a graduate student at Washington University, I have rarely encountered a University employee who is as well liked or thought of more highly by more students and faculty than Paul Discher. While Mr. Discher's status with EE students may be due to his high visibility in your department, he has a reputation even here in Mechanical Engineering of being a person who is amazingly capable and resourceful, an excellent teacher, and one who is always willing help. Even more remarkable, his reputation outside of EE is despite that he strongly and consistently prioritizes his EE students. Over the years, when I have personally asked his help or advice, he has kindly but firmly postponed my inquiry until the immediate EE undergraduate needs were addressed. I appreciate such integrity and dedication to one's department. It is, therefore, no accident nor even surprising that this year's engineering seniors of all disciplines nominated Mr. Discher as the year's outstanding staff member; the seniors in my association participated in this nomination. In addition, this coming fall 2000, Mr. Discher was to be nominated by our chapter for a national Tau Beta Pi award of recognition.

It was with great shock and disbelief, therefore, that I was recently informed that Mr. Discher is not scheduled to continue as one of your staff. I have had regular dealings with Mr. Discher over the past months and, per your request, he has not informed students regarding his status, myself included. Indeed, if my association and I had known sooner, I would have been able to better protest for Mr. Discher,s sake. I have only just found out because I had hoped to schedule a time next month during which I could

double-check regarding some facts of his career for a Tau Beta Pi nomination. He sadly informed me that he would not be available.

I do not know why Mr. Discher,s services are to be terminated. I am not involved with your department and do not care to learn the politics therein. But Mr. Discher,s integrity precedes him and speaks for him so that I know that no impropriety has been committed deserving of termination. If any dean in engineering agrees with you that the termination was deserved, please have that dean contact me; I am not interested in details. I believe, however, that there has to have been some misunderstanding. Whatever the problem, the possible solutions cannot be allowed to include termination of a faithful, ten-year, star employee, much less one who is so dear and important to the students of our school. I have attended lab sessions in your department and I cannot believe that there will be any replacing Paul Discher except at unreasonable cost to your department, to the students of the engineering school, and to the engineering school as a whole. The engineering students are the ones who will really lose out.

In conclusion, please consider an alternative solution; sign a contract with Paul Discher. For ten years Mr. Discher,s legacy has been one of going the extra mile in order to facilitate a positive learning environment in our school, especially in the electrical engineering lab. Such legacies are hard wrought and not likely to change. I trust that you will consider the students in our school and mediate a mutually beneficial solution.

Sincerely,
Michael H. Peters