3/18/13

Dear Council Members:

My name is Abram Klein. I live at 20 Stearns Street. My wife, Debbie Klein and I are the parents of 3 Longy Students, ages 11, 13, and 16 who have been studying music intensively at Longy for the past 9 years. We are here to speak about the Longy Community Programs. Longy is a unique, valuable and thriving resource for the Cambridge community and indeed the entire Boston area. Close to 1000 students are part of the Longy Community Programs that were begun in the 1970s. This institution is part of the fabric that makes Cambridge a great City.

My family and I are horrified to hear about Longy abruptly abandoning its mission to educate local youth. Even more, we are deeply disturbed and angry about the malicious and intentionally destructive way in which the current Longy/Bard administration is treating its faculty and committed community. As you know, the program was swiftly terminated by e-mail to faculty and families last week without prior notice. Over 53 faculty lost their jobs. Why were the faculty and community not given the opportunity to work toward a solution that would maintain this thriving program? Why was the faculty not given advanced warning, time and support to possibly relocate the community programs? Why would staff be summarily dismissed, and students' musical futures compromised so abruptly?

For profit corporations often behave this way, but why wouldn't the administration of Longy and Bard College attempt to assist the Community Programs in spinning off and preserving both the jobs of Longy faculty and the institution itself that provides such a tremendous value to the local community? Perhaps this can still happen with the leadership and mediation of the Cambridge government, but time is of the essence.

When we say we are deeply disturbed and angry that the Longy Administration is acting with malicious intent – here are some important facts that we feel are significant. It is no secret that the Longy Administration has been engaged in a bitter dispute with its faculty and the faculty union. In 2010, the National Labor Relations Board issued a rare formal complaint against the Longy School Administration for unfair labor practices toward the faculty union. In a January 2011 interim injunction, the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts ruled that, quote "there is reasonable cause to believe that Longy has committed an unfair labor practice." Unquote. There have been additional NLRB investigations since and this latest act by the Longy Administration will surely be subject of further NLRB investigations. Longy and Bard

have made the strategic decision that they will live with any future penalties or findings by the NLRB, as the NLRB does not have the ability to undo the decision by Longy to close Community programs.

Here's the thing: If this were not malicious: why this timing? Auditions for next year's ensembles and orchestras are within weeks. By announcing the termination when they did, Longy Administration makes it AS difficult AS possible for the Longy Community programs faculty to reconstitute and find an alternative space and preserve this important and beloved institution in some other form. Longy faculty are left scrambling for their next paycheck. How are they supposed to organize a whole new institution in the matter of a few weeks? The Longy/Bard Administration has acted so as to maximize the probability that the Community Programs institution will get scattered to the wind – the impact on the City or their students or their faculty be damned. Any sense of community stewardship or of obligation to real people is completely lacking. Longy Administration and Bard College should be absolutely ashamed.

What is more, Longy's stated rationale is to focus on its Conservatory program; BUT..without great community programs like Longy's, where do Longy's Conservatory graduates expect to find jobs? Longy's decision is a disservice to the very Conservatory students it says the decision was made to benefit.

The El Sistema program that has become a part of the Longy Administration's strategic plan is worthy, but it should not be the case that promoting a new model requires destroying an older proven and thriving one.

The City Council has a responsibility to the youth of Cambridge to make sure local institutions do right by our community. This is an important teaching moment. Please offer leadership in the form of pressure, and encouraging the Longy Administration and Bard College to reconsider its poor treatment of faculty and families and to reinstitute the community programs.

We hope that you, as a council, can help us work with Longy to find a better solution for the continuation of the Community Programs. While Longy is a private institution not under the city's control, such poor treatment of employees and families alike should not be tolerated by this Council.

Thank you for helping the now struggling community of students and talented faculty work with the Longy/Bard Administration to renegotiate a better outcome.