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EDITORIAL: Damage control: The University of Akron failed **Charles Plinton. Now President Proenza moves to fix a flawed disciplinary process**

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Mar. 20--Luis Proenza has moved appropriately to make the best of a very bad situation. The president of the University of Akron announced last week in a statement to employees that he has ordered a review of student-disciplinary and law-enforcement policies at the school.

A week ago, Beacon Journal staff writer John Higgins reported on the outrageous and callous handling of a drug-trafficking case that culminated in the suicide of **Charles Plinton**, a former graduate student.

Plinton was accused of selling drugs -- by a felon planted in a UA residence hall and paid \$50 each time he informed a drug task force about a deal with a student. The university kicked him off campus and revoked his scholarship. Plinton denied the charges. He was acquitted by a jury in common pleas court.

Notwithstanding, a university disciplinary board found him "responsible" for selling drugs to a confidential informant. Plinton could not return to complete his studies. By no means was Plinton treated fairly by the university police officers involved or the university's hearing procedures. Proenza's response is a welcome first step acknowledging that much and the need to rectify a flawed and unfair process.

There's got to be a better way to deal with concerns about drugs on campus than permitting felons roaming rights in student dorms and classrooms. Students ask for safety and security on campus, not to share quarters with an undercover sting operator with a rap sheet. Zippy works fine for a mascot. The University of Akron can do better than conduct hearings akin to a kangaroo court, applying the lowest standard of evidence, "substantial," in cases where the allegations are serious and a student's future is on the line.

In its disciplinary procedures, the university's own law school requires a more rigorous standard of "clear and convincing" evidence. So does Ohio State University in allegations of serious, nonacademic offenses. Other universities, among them Kent State, Youngstown State and Ohio University, use a standard higher than Akron's.

Proenza is right. The university must improve its processes and attention to detail and services. A university, as he said, must hold itself to the highest standards of fairness, transparency and service to students. That's part of the mission to educate, to develop in students a respect for reason and the pursuit of the truth. Unfortunately, the university failed **Charles Plinton** on all those counts.

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