

Control Yuan censures NTU, ministry

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Control Yuan members Kao Yung-cheng, left, and Peter Chang speak during a news conference at the Control Yuan in Taipei yesterday.

Photo: Chien Jung-fong, Taipei Times

The Control Yuan yesterday issued corrective measures against the Ministry of Education and National Taiwan University (NTU), saying both were responsible for a number of procedural and regulatory flaws that led to the controversy surrounding the university's presidential election.

NTU Department of Finance chair professor Kuan Chung-ming (關中明) was on Jan. 5 elected as NTU president and was scheduled to take office on Feb. 1, but a series of allegations of having taken illegal part-time jobs, plagiarism and a conflict of interest delayed the ministry's approval process and in April, it said it would not approve his election.

The university has refused to hold another election and instead filed for an administrative appeal requesting his appointment on the grounds that academic freedom and university autonomy cannot be compromised.

The Control Yuan announcement yesterday wrapped up its months-long investigation on the election, which confirmed that Kuan had contravened the Act Governing the Appointment of Educators (師資法) by illegally working for Taiwan Mobile Co as a member of its auditing and salary committees.

Kuan on June 14 last year began working with the auditing committee and with the salary committee on Aug. 2, before the university approved his applications to take up the two positions on Sep. 22, it said.

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“As a leading institution in higher education, NTU has failed to set a good example for other schools by routinely disregarding the law,” it said in a statement.

Only 18.46 percent of NTU teachers apply in advance for part-time positions, while the average among other public universities is 31.91 percent, it said.

The university’s election regulations have also been ineffective in preventing conflict of interests, the Control Yuan said.

It is reasonable to assume that Taiwan Mobile vice chairman Richard Tsai (蔡啟芳), an election committee member, might have been biased, since Kuan was paid NT\$5 million to NT\$10 million (US\$162,101 to US\$324,202) per year for his position as an independent director of Taiwan Mobile, the Control Yuan said.

While it urged the university to improve its administrative procedures and regulations on ensuring the disclosure of information, it also asked the ministry to improve its supervision of and regulations governing university elections.

“Regulations on public universities’ presidential elections are limited in scope, causing many election disputes. The poorly designed supplementary mechanisms also fail to ensure that talented candidates are nominated, as president-elects tend to be from the same academic disciplines,” it said.

The ministry needs to develop clear procedures for handling legal disputes between itself and universities, it added.

Minister of Education Yeh Jiunn-rong (葉俊榮) said the ministry would prioritize reforming regulations on university presidential elections and called on NTU to work with the ministry to solve the issues regarding the election.

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The ministry would assist the university and improve related regulations, he added.

Having met with NTU officials, the election committee, faculty members and student groups, he is aware there are opposing opinions regarding the issue within the school, he said.

“To better ensure students’ rights, as well as its own development, NTU should more actively communicate with its teachers and students on reforming its regulations,” Yeh said. “This would help eliminate many unnecessary conflicts.”

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