

December 4, 2008

David J. Hacker
Litigation Staff Counsel
ADF Center for Academic Freedom

Dear Mr. Hacker:

I am in receipt of your letter concerning allegations that Mr. Jonathan Lopez' first amendment rights were violated in his Speech 101 class that is taught by Professor John Matteson. Let me set the record straight.

You wrote, "Although Mr. Lopez notified LACC of this untenable situation, these violations have gone uncorrected." This statement is incorrect. I have met twice with Mr. Lopez; once in the hallway as I was going to a scheduled meeting and once in my office when I invited him in for an unscheduled meeting. I listened to his complaint and asked him to put it in writing. He did so. On another day he approached me in the hallway and indicated he had an additional concern to add to his initial complaint. Since I was on the way to a scheduled meeting, I asked him to send it to me in writing via email. I also asked him to provide supporting documentation from students whom he indicated supported his accounting of the classroom incident with Mr. Matteson. He indicated he would. Instead, he chose to involve your organization.

Upon my first meeting with Mr. Lopez I assured him that I was going to start the progressive discipline process immediately; which I have done. I further told him that in order to do so, I would need written statements. He provided me with the first statement but chose to use you to provide the additional complaint.

I view this classroom incident to be extremely serious in nature and will be able to expedite the process. However, since this is a personnel matter, I cannot violate Mr. Matteson's privacy. Suffice it to say, action is being taken, but specific details may not be shared with Mr. Lopez or you.

Let me make this perfectly clear, in no way have Mr. Lopez' concerns been ignored. On the contrary, LACC administration takes all complaints seriously. Please be aware that the Los Angeles Community College District has a contractual obligation to follow the guidelines of the AFT Local 1521 faculty contract which outlines specific procedures for progressive disciplinary action.

Furthermore, you should be aware, that today I received statements from two students which were signed by several members of Mr. Lopez' class. Contrary to Mr. Lopez' assumptions, these classmates were deeply offended by his speech. One of the students stated that "His speech was not of the

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informative style that our assignment called for, but rather a preachy, persuasive speech that was completely inappropriate and deeply offensive. I respect his right to freedom of speech, but I also do not believe that our classroom is the proper platform for him to spout his hateful propaganda.”

The second student said “I don’t know what kind of actions can be taken in this situation, but I expect that this student should have to pay some price for preaching hate in the classroom.”

Where do we go from here? Regardless of the other students’ reactions to Mr. Lopez’ speech, Mr. Matteson will still be disciplined. First amendment rights will not be violated as is evidenced by the fact that even though many of the students were offended by Mr. Lopez’ speech, no action will be taken against any of them for expressing their opinions.

Please be advised that Mr. Lopez, at our first meeting, asked me if he should drop the class. I recommended that he stay in the class since the end of the semester is imminent. I also assured him that he would receive a fair grade for the speech in question, as well as a fair grade for the entire class.

Should you have any further questions please feel free to contact me. I gave Mr. Lopez my business card and asked him to stay in touch until the matter of his grade is resolved.

Cordially.



Allison Jones
Dean, Academic Affairs

cc: Dr. Jamillah Moore
Dr. Kathleen Burke-Kelly
Jeanne Dunphy