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FIRE Hails FreeSpeech Win for Conservative SUNYFredonia Prof

2006-08-28 -- WDC Media News --

(AgapePress) - A philosophy professor at the State University of New York at Fredonia, who says he was denied a promotion by the school for expressing conservative views, is now being promoted.

Stephen Kershner claims SUNY denied him advancement to a full professorship after he wrote three opinion articles criticizing the university for its affirmative action policy, its student code, and its lack of conservative professors.

However, less than three weeks after the [Foundation for Individual Rights in Education](#) (FIRE) publicly accused the school of violating Kershner's free-speech and academic-freedom rights, SUNY-Fredonia's President Dennis Hefner notified Kershner that he was "promoted to the rank of full professor."

FIRE President Greg Lukianoff says Hefner had originally told Kershner his status would be reevaluated in a year. But after the advocacy group wrote the school officials, Lukianoff notes, "they said they re-issued the letter that denied his promotion, but trying to take out all of the material that indicated that he was being punished due to his beliefs."

That was amazing, Lukianoff points out, "because we had the first letter; but it said, 'because of your statements about the university, we're not promoting you.'" Afterward, the FIRE spokesman says, SUNY officials "basically tried to erase the past" by removing from the letter the language that proved Kershner was being refused promotion due to his expression of his viewpoints.

However, Lukianoff believes SUNY-Fredonia's explanations of its sudden change of heart concerning Kershner's promotion is simply the university's way of trying to cover its tracks.

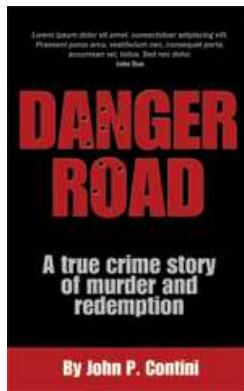
"The funniest thing about it, though," the watchdog group's president observes, "is that the university is trying to pretend that this was just the normal course of action and that the widespread public condemnations they received had nothing to do with the decision. But, of course, that's pretty hard to swallow."

In any event, Kershner now has his promotion. He will receive a salary increase of \$2,000 and will officially hold the rank of full professor, effective September 1. And meanwhile, Lukianoff says, hopefully President Hefner will now think twice before making promotion decisions based on a professor's point of view.

Jim Brown, a regular contributor to *AgapePress*, is a reporter for [American Family Radio News](#), which can be heard online.

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