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Community college professor could be fired over e-mail

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A Maricopa Community Colleges professor could be fired after he sent an e-mail to district employees that contained a link to Pat Buchanan's Web site and a transcript of a George Washington Thanksgiving proclamation.

Math Professor Walter Kehowski, who has sent controversial e-mails in the past, was placed on paid leave from his job at Glendale Community College. A national free-speech group, Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, has taken up his cause and is asking the Maricopa County Community College District to exonerate him.

Greg Lukianoff, president of the Philadelphia-based group, said Kehowski is being targeted because of the e-mail, sent Nov. 22, with the 1789 proclamation and the link to the site of Buchanan, a conservative commentator and former presidential candidate. Lukianoff said five employees filed complaints because the Buchanan site criticized immigration policies.

"This case would be almost funny if it wasn't having such serious implications for the professor's life and livelihood," Lukianoff said.

Kehowski declined comment Monday.

He has angered some employees and students in the past with his e-mails, leading to debate over academic freedom and how far professors can go in expressing opinions.

In 2003, he e-mailed employees several Internet links that contained statements about Hispanics. Titles on the Web sites included, "Mexicans Think U.S. Belongs to Them!" and "Mexican Double Standard."

School administrators said his postings were abrasive and divisive, but said they could do little to prevent professors from expressing their views outside class.

This year, district Chancellor Rufus Glasper notified the professor March 9 that he intended to recommend to the governing board that Kehowski be dismissed. He said Kehowski's Nov. 22 e-mail violated the district's electronic communications policy, which prohibits using district e-mail for private or personal matters.

Glasper's letter says the professor continued to disregard district policies despite previous sanctions and directives. Kehowski was suspended without pay for five days in September 2005 for a similar violation.

A hearing date has been set for June 5 before a three-member faculty committee, which will listen to evidence and make a recommendation to the chancellor. Glasper then will make a recommendation to the governing board, which has the final say.

Reach the reporter (602) 444-8072.

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Your comments

Why am I not surprised to see MCCC back in the news with something negative?(**Kimberly (Kimberly6999)**, May 8, 2007 07:40AM)

Holly9353..... War...now thats a winner and he is still going strong in the Establishment preaching anti-Establishment stuff(**Chiefthunderclapper1408**, May 8, 2007 07:26AM)

@#s%& = N-A-Z-I-SSSSSS... see even that is censored by our politico correct idiots....(**Chiefthunderclapper1408**, May 8, 2007 07:24AM)

From an accounting perspective, they need to create the reserve....
Why create a reserve??? Just raise our taxes and suck it out of working people so these out of touch liberals can keep on bashing the SYSTEM....the left in this country are the new @#\$%& and they know it too..(**Chiefthunderclapper1408**, May 8, 2007 07:23AM)

Remember Ward Churchill. There should be no double standard. I am really tired of the polarization here. There are more legal grounds to fire Kehowski, abuse of a business email account. Kehowski could have sent the emails using a private account - Yahoo, Hotmail or whatever. (**Holly9353**, May 8, 2007 07:22AM)

By the time this professor inevitably wins damages in the millions from the resulting court case from this firing, these district administrators will be long gone. From an accounting perspective, they need to create the reserve for the expected loss now and have to answer for it.(**Jeff2045**, May 8, 2007 07:16AM)

Why should this situation shock anyone? This is just another example of the Socialist Academic Establish eliminating contrary opinion. Until the USA privatizes education here, only one opinion will be heard, similar to 1930'S Germany, indoctrination replaces reason. There is a difference now persecution is executed financially not physically.(**Samuel9722**, May 8, 2007 07:00AM)

Rufus? I think he and Eliza should leave town.(**Carl4480**, May 8, 2007 06:56AM)

I will call these hypocrites today and tell them what I think!!!! I took a US history class at Estrella and for two week all your heard was that the Founding Fathers are murderers, slave owners, no good white scum, we are the @#\$%& of the world..... I hate these editorializing teachers nowadays, all they can teach is their communist views and nobody stops them.....Idiotic tax sucking nincompoops!!!!(**Chiefthunderclapper1408**, May 8, 2007 06:19AM)

This is ridiculous, if he had been on the left and written about an agenda that also had a link to a political

commentator or site that was on the left and people complained this would not have been an issue. Chancellor Glasper- if you want to dismiss everyone who has used the district's e-mail for personal use then you need to fire 99% of the professors and staff in the district. This is just a crutch to lean on since you can't find any other ground to stand on. You should encourage free thinking on both sides of the fence and simply as that the content be toned down.

This issue of supporting ones agenda and attacking another is why there is so much dissent and polarization in this country. You should encourage tolerance of others opinions and expression as long as it does not promote hate or violence.

(bryan201, May 8, 2007 06:16AM)

Yeah, I agree. I think there may be more to the story though. Did he send this to other employees out of nowhere or had they been discussing the topic over e-mail before that? If it was out of nowhere, how annoying; I agree with you, but I don't want to hear your political views unless I ask for them. If not, it's a different story..(Ashley1907, May 8, 2007 06:04AM)

It isn't like he hasn't been warned and punished previously for blatantly disregarding the rules. He knew the consequences and made his choices, so let the chips fall where they may.

People have a right to be able to do their jobs without having to wade through spam sent by some political hack wannabe. I agree that people are way too easily offended nowadays, but still, the teacher in question had already had the district policy explained to him in every way except for crayon.

He's a big boy; he needs to accept responsibility for his actions.(Stocker Brown (StockerBrown), May 8, 2007 06:01AM)

Oh no, a professor with his own opinion! Truly an awful thought. If a college doesn't encourage its students to develop their own beliefs regardless of popular opinion, well, I guess it's something like GCC evidently..(Ashley1907, May 8, 2007 05:57AM)

The teacher is an a-word, but he has every right in the world to say what he wants.

Unless of course he signed a contract saying that he can't, then that's his problem.

Although I do draw the line at emailing students... you are there to teach a subject not propoganda. But the other teachers he sent it to should grow up and just send him back their own emails.(Lisa8791, May 8, 2007 05:45AM)

So the price of freedom of speech (much less the truth where illegal aliens are concerned) is cause for discharge...

You would think that the last place this would occur would be in an institution that professes "Higher Education"!(Rix873, May 8, 2007 05:20AM)
