

November 19, 2001

President Margaret Gratton
Orange Coast College
2701 Fairview Rd.
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

Dear President Gratton:

Last month, FIRE wrote to you, your staff, and your Board of Trustees regarding Orange Coast Community College's failure to defend Free Speech, academic freedom, Due Process, and Professor Kenneth Hearlson. We have yet to receive a response from the administration. We hoped that the actions taken by the administration would be as shocking to you as they were to FIRE, or, at the least, that the spirit of our October 5 letter (attached) and the gravity of the concerns raised merited a response. Our letter only requested that the university fulfill its Constitutional duties and that the Board fulfill its fiduciary duties, yet we have received no formal response. Despite producing exculpatory evidence, Professor Hearlson continues to be suspended by the administration for his clearly protected speech.

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We hoped that this issue would be settled through discussion, as had been the case at numerous institutions, but that hope remains unrealized. FIRE is committed to seeing this matter through to a just conclusion, and we will fully utilize our extensive media resources, our in-house resources, and our extensive network of devoted attorneys. OCC must realize that these issues simply will not go away, and they will continually be submitted to the court of national public opinion, and to every other appropriate forum, until Orange Coast Community College's abusive behavior ends. We know that no one wants OCC to be blighted by the clear abandonment of Free Speech at the very moment in history when it became most important to defend it. Much less, OCC would not want the indignity of having to be ordered to obey Bill of Rights and the canons of academic freedom, which OCC should defend without pause and, certainly, without asking.

Our requests in the October 5th letter remain unaltered. We look forward to a formal response.

Sincerely yours,

Greg Lukianoff
Director of Legal and Public Advocacy

cc:
William Vega, Chancellor
Robert Dees, Vice President, Instruction

John Farmer, Chief of Security
Carol Burke, President of Academic Senate
Michael Olds, Senator-at-Large, Academic Senate
Amina Adan, Senator-at-Large, Academic Senate
Armando R. Ruiz, President, Coast Community College District Board of Trustees
Walter G. Howald, Vice President, Coast Community College District Board of Trustees
Paul G. Berger, Coast Community College District Board of Trustees
George E. Brown, Coast Community College District Board of Trustees
Jerry Patterson, Coast Community College District Board of Trustees
Amy Angelo, Student Trustee, Coast Community College District Board of Trustees