

Michael Weiner, Ph.D.
Interim Dean of Faculty
Soka University of America
1 University Drive
Aliso Viejo, CA 92656

RE: Faculty Adjudication Committee Review of Professor Aneil Rallin

Dear Dr. Weiner,

The Faculty Adjudication Committee met with Dr. Aneil Rallin on Tuesday, 17 May 2022 to discuss with him the allegations set forth in your letter to him of 1 April 2022. Present at this meeting were Drs. Anthony Mazeroll and Jay Heffron, Dr. Aneil Rallin, and Dr. Kristi Wilson (whose role was as an observer).

After reading all the materials provided by the Dean of Faculty and Dr. Rallin, the committee is split in its decision; one member voting that there are grounds for dismissal, the other voting that there are no grounds for dismissal. Although in the opening statements of the meeting, both committee members stated that, based less on the original documents posted at Box in late April, early May—the four student complaints; the Writing 305 syllabus; Writing 305.01 and Writing 305.03 Contents & Articles; and you're your original notice of allegations to Rallin on April 1st—than on all the recent contestations by students, faculty, and Rallin himself (in a letter to our Committee), it was recommended to the Chair, prior to our meeting with Rallin on May 17th, that based on the latter we discount any intention of recommending his dismissal. This we did, as per the minutes of the meeting prepared by Clare Lorenzo, beginning with the Chair's statement (written by the second committee member) that “we do not want anything to do with your dismissal” and that of the second committee member “We have no intention of recommending your dismissal,” referencing the student testimonials (N: 19).

Having read carefully now through all the original documents—first and foremost student complaints, course readings, and the Dean's letter of notice—the one member believes it was a procedural mistake, drawing primarily on all the strong, if rhetorical counterarguments, to declare with this meeting an end to the Adjudication Committee review process. This was a mistake for which they apologize.

Of the course contents, many of which they've been recently browsing through, most disturbing for them (a required reading) was Jarrar's "Taking the Knife, On Link in Queer Spaces." A large grievance against it, including the denial of any so-called trigger warnings by Professor Rallin, appears in Student Complaint 2:

"For example, the piece about the orgy explicitly states, 'there is a stereotype that those interested in kink come from abusive families' as if to say it is a misconception, and then goes on to describe that the author and the author's sexual partners were chased with knives by their

parents when they were young, and suggests that ‘kink’ is a way of healing childhood trauma during which once can play-as if a child-while having sex with the objects that were used to threaten them. To me, this is an incredibly disturbing (not to mention vaguely pedophilic) message to force students to read, and our only class discussion on it was to suggest that sex and sexual deviancy can be an exciting new way to understand our bodies.”

And similarly, this from Student Complaint 4:

"While many students feel as though these courses give voice to their experience as people of color or those interested in promoting various causes, many other students, including students of color, queer students, and students who have lived trauma, marginalization, and discrimination, feel silenced or shunned if they express their disagreement. Students are afraid to ask questions or contribute to classroom discussions."

This professor finds Professor Rallin guilty of several of the causes for faculty dismissal, first and foremost, “5) actions and behavior that exhibit moral turpitude or gross indifference to the well-being of others.”

At the *Faculty Handbook* (pp. 3-4) one reads, “SUA strives to create and maintain a humanistic educational environment guided by ethical considerations that serve to promote the full growth and development of all members of its community. In the fulfillment of their responsibilities, the manner in which faculty members conduct themselves—toward students, other members of the faculty, the University and the wider community—should reflect their observance of the following ethical principles.” Under Teaching and Learning, these include “Professors demonstrate respect for students as individuals and adhere to their proper roles as intellectual guides and counselors” and “They avoid any exploitation, harassment, or discriminatory treatment of students.” Based on students’ complaints and the kind and degree of his EDU 503Writing 305 course readings, Professor Rallin is in violation of these Principles of Faculty Conduct and is thus eligible for faculty dismissal.

Finally, at the *Faculty Handbook* under Policy on Teaching Effectiveness (pp. 21-22) it reads “whatever personal beliefs a faculty member holds or expresses will not impinge negatively on the classroom environment or the basic learning process.” One of the common student complaints is the interfusion of Professor Rallin’s personal values and beliefs with his University course instruction. As one student has complained, “In class discussion about the uselessness of dialogue, the professor proposed the question, ‘What rights have been won by dialogue?’ implying that the only way to create social change is through violent revolution, which directly opposes the university’s mission. This hopeless, pessimistic view of society—that we cannot do anything to change difficult circumstances—encourages righteous victimization for students who identify with being oppressed and shames students who are perceived to be ‘oppressors’ because of the historical actions of their ethnic-group, confining them to silent guilt.”

Like it or not, short of his dismissal nothing here, in the way of “moral turpitude” or “indifference to the well-being of others,” is going to ebb. Neither is it partisan nor unjust to call for Professor Rallin’s dismissal from SUA, according to the one committee member.

The other committee member believes that Dr. Rallin's principles and actions during his Writing 305 Writing the Body course do not qualify him for "University remediation and/or dismissal" despite allegations of discriminatory treatment and inappropriate course materials. This decision was based upon materials provided by the Dean of Faculty, including the syllabus, course reading materials, and letters of complaints (Complaint Letter 03 was not used as it was solely hear-say), materials that Dr. Rallin submitted, as well as information that was gathered by this committee member prior to the adjudication meeting of 17 May. The reasoning is outlined in the following.

1. Principles of Faculty Conduct (pp. 3-5)

The evidence that was provided does not support that Dr. Rallin violated the Principles of Conduct. From reading the letters that were written by other students who took this same class, the students stated that the discussions they had on the reading material were all done respectfully. If students felt uncomfortable with the material, Dr. Rallin would provide them with alternative material to read and discuss. Both in person and via letters of support students stated they were not forced to talk about the material if they were not comfortable doing so and they did not witness any exploitation, harassment, or discriminatory treatment of any student in the class. The over-whelming student comments stated that Dr. Rallin always provided "trigger warnings" for the readings and discussion, despite what was written in the complaint letters.

2. Policy of Teaching Effectiveness (pp. 21-22)

From the letters of support, it was made abundantly clear that Dr. Rallin is an affective teacher. In a discussion with an international student who took Dr. Rallin's Writing the Body course, the student stated that "this course changed her life". It gave her a "much broader prospective of the human condition and of humanity". Isn't that what Soka Education is supposed to do? Two additional students stated that this was one of the best courses they had taken during their time at Soka.

3. Causes and Procedures for Faculty Dismissal (p. 39)

Based solely on the hearing with Rallin and the evidence provided, this committee member has ruled out the Causes and Procedures for Faculty Dismissal as they appear in the Soka University of America Faculty Handbook (p. 39).

Thus, to the allegation of "unwillingness or inability to carry out assigned duties," there appears to be no proof of this, the assigned duty being, according the University Writing Program (Soka University Catalogue, 2019-2020, p. 56) "to cultivate lifelong learning in written and oral communication by encouraging students to develop their capacity to reflect on events and information, to reason critically and thoughtfully, and to develop a commitment to the ethical uses of language." This is especially true of Writing 305 courses, which are "organized around broad, often cross-disciplinary topics" (p. 57), Rallin's "Writing the Body" exemplifying this as per the syllabus, the course designed to consider "a variety of texts from across disciplines,

genres, and media; interrogate the ideas/questions these texts raise; and think carefully about the implications of these texts for our own composition practices.”

There was no evidence of “serious instructional deficiency” in Dr. Rallin’s teaching. In fact, as stated previously, one student stated, “this course changed her life” and provided her a “much broader prospective of the human condition and of humanity”: the theme of Soka Education.

As to the potential allegation of “behavior contrary to the Principles of Faculty Conduct,” There was no evidence provided to support this allegation. As an instructor we are here to challenge and to provide thought provoking material that helps our students glean a broader view of the world they are going to be living in when they leave Soka.

Although this course appears to be a controversial course, it appears that Dr. Rallin did not demonstrate “wanton or egregious disruption of the University’s function as a site of independent learning and scholarship”. Based on the evidence provided, the argument can be made that this course is one of the few examples of independent learning and scholarship at SUA.

I must mention “Taking the Knife, On Link in Queer Spaces” by Randa Jarrar. If you just read no further no than the title, the reader would have no idea that this article takes the theme that everyone should be in charge of their own bodies, and no one has any rights over someone else unless given permission. Sure, the article is a provocative, but it is no way pedophilic

Although there is much empathy for the three students who appear to have been offended or were upset at the material discussed during the teaching of the course, the allegations set forth by the Dean of Faculty are not supported by the evidence.

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Anthony I. Mazeroll, Ph.D.
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