



September 9, 2024

To: Professor Aurel Bulgac

From: Dianne Harris – Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

Subject: Closure and Agreement of Mutual Consent

Dear Professor Bulgac,

I am writing to you following the November 14, 2023, Faculty Code 25-71.D meeting we had with Peter Denis, Assistant Dean for Personnel. This meeting was a follow-up session to the meeting you had on October 30, 2023, with Larry Yaffe, then Chair of the Department of Physics, and Assistant Dean Denis.

As you will recall, our meeting focused on a report from a student concerning an office hours interaction you had with him and another student, early in the Fall Quarter of the 2023/2024 academic year. You stated that during that meeting, to emphasize the importance of the students taking care in answering questions, you told the students about a film scene that depicted a practice used in the Japanese mafia, whereby a member who has failed the group in some way offers to cut their own little finger as an act of atonement, and in doing so you displayed a knife, which you characterized as a “small bread knife,” that you kept in your office to cut sandwiches. One of the students who attended those office hours conveyed a version of these events to an academic advisor and discussed the incident with Safe Campus as a potential safety issue. You vehemently disagree with the characterization of events in the report to Safe Campus. That student subsequently reported to Assistant Dean Denis that, after due consideration, he realized he was not ever in danger of any act of violence from you, and he asked that the matter be dropped, indicating he felt safe continuing on in the Physics Department.

Nevertheless, during our discussion, I conveyed to you that your sharing of this story while displaying a knife could have been alarming to a student and was therefore inappropriate. Shortly after our meeting, you wrote the following in an email to me and Peter Denis:

I had a misunderstanding during our conversation today, which hindered me from acknowledging your concern. I wanted to make sure that you understood that I didn't have bad intention, but I realize you want me to understand that any mention of any story which references any form of violence can be alarming to a student and is therefore inappropriate. I see that now and will henceforth take great care to be aware of that.

You confirmed that you never had the intention to harm anyone in any manner, and you contend that the University overreacted to this incident and that your removal from campus since November 2023 has been unnecessary, unfair, and harmful to you and to your students.

In the interest of resolving this matter on terms that are acceptable to all parties, we have agreed to the following:



- (1) At your suggestion, as an alternative to the University's initial proposal, the University will retain and pay for a qualified observer from the Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence, or a comparable organization, who will observe your undergraduate lectures and/or office hours, and both you and I will receive feedback from the observer. Observations will occur in the fall, winter and spring quarters of this upcoming academic year, 2024-2025.
- (2) Upon your agreement to this, the University will immediately permit you to return to campus.
- (3) Neither the University nor you will retaliate in any manner against any person(s) involved or believed to be involved in this incident.

If you agree, please provide me a signed copy of this letter by no later than Friday, September 13, 2024. Your agreement with and adherence to the conditions outlined in this letter will bring to an end the process in which we have been engaged under Section 25-71 of the Faculty Code. You and I agree not to seek additional review of the above-referenced conduct through any Faculty Code or other legal process, except to enforce the terms of this agreement if necessary.

I appreciate your cooperation in this process and hope that we can consider this matter closed.

Dianne Harris – Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

9-9-24

Date

Aurel Bulgac – Professor UW Department of Physics

Date

9/9/24