



STATEMENT OF REASONS
DISMISSAL FOR CAUSE
PROFESSOR LAWRENCE CONNELL
February 24, 2011

This Statement of Reasons for Dismissal for Cause for Professor Lawrence Connell is issued pursuant to Article V, Section 1(b) of the Widener University School of Law Promotion, Retention and Tenure Guidelines.

BACKGROUND

1. On December 9, 2010, Vice Dean Patrick Kelly met with Professor Connell and delivered to him a binder of materials relating to student complaints of discrimination and/or harassment by Professor Connell.
2. Specific allegations included, but were not limited to, the following:
 - a. “a person who is shooting at black folks [is] less dangerous than a person who is shooting randomly;”
 - b. “You mean to tell me, if you see two black men walking, you are not going to cross the street;”
 - c. Reference to African Americans as “black folks;”
 - d. Victim hypothetical using a female student coupled with the words “Die Bitch;”
 - e. Hypotheticals in which Professor Connell “decided to shoot Dean Ammons and then blew her fucking head off;”
 - f. “all criminals are poor and all poor are black folk;”
 - g. “racist and sexist comments are not [right] in the classroom;”
 - h. Professor Connell’s “excessive use of profanity offensive...;”

- i. “He also called a female police officer ‘honey’. . . . Referring to women as ‘honey’ implies that women are second class citizens”;
- j. “Referring to African Americans as ‘Black folk’ implies that they are uneducated, uncultured, and undeserving of respect by the justice system.”

3. The allegations of discrimination and/or harassment, having been made to various members of the administration, including Vice Dean J. Patrick Kelly, triggered the procedures set forth in the University’s Discrimination and Harassment Codes, specifically the Faculty Member Discrimination and Harassment Code (“Code”), Section 5(a).

4. In accordance with Section 5(a) of the Code, Vice Dean Kelly, as “Facilitator,” outlined the allegations to Professor Connell in writing and asked that Professor Connell respond to the allegations and meet with Vice Dean Kelly to discuss an appropriate resolution.

5. Professor Connell repeatedly refused to meet with Vice Dean Kelly without counsel present. The Code does not provide that counsel be present for an informal grievance meeting with the Facilitator.

6. Professor Connell was advised that his continued refusal to meet with Dean Kelly was a violation of the Code and may result in dismissal for cause proceedings’ being instituted against him.

7. Professor Connell has refused to participate in the Informal Grievance Procedures under the University’s Discrimination and Harassment Codes.

8. All Faculty members are required to carry out his or her academic duties and activities in a professional manner. *Promotion, Retention and Tenure Guidelines, Preamble, Policy Statement on Tenure.*

9. The Law School may terminate an appointment with tenure or a probationary appointment before the end of the specified term for cause
Promotion, Retention and Tenure Guidelines, Article I, Section 12(a).

10. The Faculty Member Discrimination and Harassment Code of Widener University applies to all alleged claims of discrimination and/or harassment brought against Faculty members by any member of the University community on the basis of sex, age, race, national origin or ethnicity, religion, disability, status as a veteran, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status or genetic information. *Faculty Member Discrimination and Harassment Code, Section 1.*

11. It is the obligation of all Faculty members to abide by the rules, regulations and codes of the University. Specifically, a Faculty member must exhibit, *inter alia*:

- a. compliance with the ethical standards of the profession and the University; and
- b. compliance with University and Law School academic rules.

Promotion, Retention and Tenure Guidelines, Article II, Section 2.

12. Pursuant to Prof. Connell's contract/appointment letter, Prof. Connell is required to follow "[t]he regulations for Widener University School of Law faculty, including but not limited to the Academic Code, Dean's Office Regulations and the applicable provisions of the Widener University Policies on Drug Free Workplace,


Sexual Harassment and Confidentiality of Student Records . . .” *Letter of Appointment, Lawrence J. Connell, April 29, 2010, Article I, Section 2.*

STATEMENT OF REASONS

Professor Connell’s refusal to participate in the University’s Discrimination and Harassment Code procedure, and, specifically, the Informal Grievance Procedure, constitutes (1) an intentional and knowing violation of the standards set forth in paragraphs 11(a) and (b) above and (2) a breach of Prof. Connell’s employment contract as set forth in paragraph 12 above, and, as such, is the reason for the recommendation of dismissal of Professor Lawrence Connell for cause.

RECOMMENDATION OF DISMISSAL FOR CAUSE

Professor Lawrence Connell fails to meet the standards for retention under Article II of the Promotion, Retention and Tenure Guidelines, and has breached his contract of employment, and is, therefore, subject to dismissal for cause, a recommendation for which is made herein by Dean Linda L. Ammons.


LINDA L. AMMONS, J.D.
ASSOCIATE PROVOST AND DEAN
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