



From the Desk of
Dr. Louis E. Zellers
Superintendent/President

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March 7, 2003

Mr. Thor L. Halvorssen
Foundation for Individual Rights in Education
210 West Washington Square, Suite 303
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Dear Mr. Halvorssen:

Thank you for your March 4, 2003 letter concerning the conduct of Professor Kahn, instructor of Speech 106 at Citrus College. Mr. Samuel Lee, Associate Dean for Language Arts and Foreign Languages, visited Professor Kahn's class yesterday, from 12:30 p.m. to 1:40 p.m. He met directly with the students and asked them about the allegations cited in your letter. Based on the outcome of that meeting, we believe the instructor did abuse her authority in two specific ways:

1. Professor Kahn gave students an extra credit assignment to write a letter to President George W. Bush protesting the possible war with Iraq. Students were clear in their understanding that they would only receive credit if they wrote "protest" letters. Students were told that those who wrote letters expressing alternate views (including support for the war) would not receive credit. At Citrus College we strongly believe that all students should have freedom of expression and equal opportunity to benefit, regardless of their political beliefs. We believe that this assignment denied students this opportunity and, further, could have encouraged some to violate their conscience in order to benefit. We are deeply saddened that this took place. We are taking the following action to bring justice to bear and mitigate the results of this abuse:

- I am sending a letter of apology to President George W. Bush, explaining the illegitimate nature of the assignment and requesting that all letters associated with the assignment be retracted.
- The extra credit for that assignment will be expunged.
- An alternative assignment will allow students to receive extra credit for drafting a letter to George W. Bush concerning the possible war with Iraq. Students will be encouraged to express their beliefs, and will receive credit regardless of those beliefs. Students will not be asked to send their letters in order to receive credit.

2. Professor Kahn gave students an extra credit assignment to write a letter to their local state representative, expressing an explicit political viewpoint. Because nearly all students were in the

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same district, the letters were written to California State Senator Jack Scott. Again, all students understood that they would only receive extra credit if they wrote letters expressing a specific political agenda. Our reaction to this injustice is the same as expressed in the first instance: it ought not to have happened. We are taking the following action to bring justice to bear and mitigate the results of this abuse:

- I am sending a letter of apology to Senator Jack Scott, explaining the illegitimate nature of the assignment and requesting that all letters associated with the assignment be retracted.
- The extra credit for that assignment will be expunged.
- An alternative assignment will allow students to receive extra credit for drafting a letter to their local state representative concerning the state's current budget situation. Students will be encouraged to express their beliefs, and will receive credit regardless of those beliefs. Students will not be asked to send their letters in order to receive credit.

Further actions Citrus College will take in response to these abuses will include:

- Students in Professor Kahn's class will be provided with a current list of their assignment grades for Speech 106. If any student has a dispute concerning a grade, Mr. Lee will work with the instructor and student to resolve the dispute before final grades are due.
- While respecting the due process rights of the instructor, Citrus College will sanction Professor Kahn in an appropriate manner.

At the conclusion of the meeting with the Speech 106 students on March 6, 2003, Mr. Lee apologized on behalf of Citrus College for this violation of their free speech rights. He reiterated to students that Citrus College has been, and will continue to be, a staunch defender of freedom of speech and freedom of conscience.

I would like to thank the courageous students who brought this to the attention of Mr. Lee. I would like to thank Mr. Lee for following up on these concerns in a very timely and effective manner (the first he learned of these complaints was Thursday, February 27, 2003). As soon as the next day, he was working with all parties concerned to resolve the issue. I would also like to thank the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) for working so vigorously to safeguard our liberties by supporting our efforts with additional facts and advising the college on appropriate solutions.

Sincerely,

Louis E. Zellers
Superintendent/President

LEZ/SL:cl

c: Congressman David Dreier
Senator Bob Margett