

May 13, 2021

Board Discipline Code and Prohibited Acts

Dear Colleagues,

The United Faculty Representative Council voted in support of sharing the statement copied below from Professor Josh House regarding the viral video of his Communications Studies colleague. Permission was granted by Professor House.

In addition, please see the links below to Board Policy AP/BP 5500 Standards of Student Conduct and Discipline, AP 3720 Computer and Electronic Communication Systems, and Ed Code 78907 Instructional Materials: Prohibited Acts.

My name is Josh House and I am a full time faculty member in the Communication Studies department at Cypress College. I have taken over classes for the professor who was removed following the viral video incident. I would like to share with folks the understanding of these circumstances I have gained since then. I have gained this understanding by talking to the other students in the class in question, by watching the full video of class from that day, and by evaluating other course materials presented to the students in that class. I believe this is an issue of academic freedom that affects us all, and that more action is required to protect our colleague.

First, there is ample evidence that the seemingly contentious back-and-forth in the video was actually a planned part of an assignment designed to give the students the skills to deal with combative or time-monopolizing questioners. The instructor was role-playing a part in order to teach students difficult but valuable skills. This was first brought to my attention by the other students in the class, almost as soon as our first session together started. They were able to articulate several strategies they had learned in class to deal with this situation and highlighted that the student in question had failed to use any of these techniques. They also claimed, and materials from previous assignments confirm, that they had been formally quizzed on this material, and that they had been given a chance to practice in a previous speech. Watching the whole video it is clear that everyone received the same treatment, regardless of their political leanings. This student was not singled out. Other students were also cut short to make sure there was time for everyone to speak, something she explained to each student, including the one in question. Also, at the end of class that student was given time to say anything that he felt he hadn't been allowed to say. He declined and thanked the instructor for remembering to give him his time as she said she would. If anything, he got more of an opportunity to speak than other students.

The way this professor taught this lesson to her students might not be the way that you would choose to teach it, but that is the very heart of academic freedom. She, as an expert in the field, designed a lesson to teach her students skills as she saw fit, in a way that doesn't violate any codes of conduct and that was well understood by the students in her class. Those students, the people with the most context in this situation, immediately supported her. In a statement today the President said "...Cypress College has supported and will continue to support the academic freedoms we know are essential for a free exchange of ideas in the classroom. Equally important is our mission to serve our students in a safe learning environment. These things

converged in a dramatic way this week...” but with all due respect to the President, it appears that those things did not converge in a dramatic way. They converged in a very average way, where a safe learning environment led to the exercise of academic freedom and a free exchange of ideas.

Many of her Comm studies colleagues, including myself, have expressed our support for this professor. So I am asking that you join us in support of her and that the college and district take concrete actions to protect our academic freedom. Supporting academic freedom generally by supporting this professor specifically means telling the truth about what happened. After all, so far the media and the public just have the word of one student and the statements from the college to get information from, so what we say or don't say publicly makes all the difference. Finally, I will close by asking you to consider the ramifications of not offering our support in this moment. This could happen to anyone. This is about a 3-minute video, stripped of context and distributed to bad faith “news” sources that didn't even bother doing cursory research into the situation before spreading the video far and wide. If we don't come to the defense of this professor, who will? Her life is being ruined because of this. She is receiving non-stop harassment and threats and lives in constant fear for herself and her family. The campus said that after reviewing all of the details they would address the situation fully. I sincerely hope that they do, so that we can come together as a college. But coming together doesn't mean compromising with the people making threats against the college, it means respectfully searching for and *speaking* the truth.

AP 5500 and BP 5500 Standards of Student Conduct and Discipline

https://nocccd.edu/files/5500bpfinalrevisedbot-2017-11-28_60037.pdf

https://nocccd.edu/files/5500apfinalreviseddcc-2017-09-25_51348.pdf

Computer and Electronic Communications Systems

https://nocccd.edu/files/3720aprevisedapproved-dcc-2021-01-25_91255.pdf

Ed Code 78907

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displayText.xhtml?lawCode=EDC&division=7.&title=3.&part=48.&chapter=7.&article=1

Education Code 78907 Instructional Materials: Prohibited Acts

The use by any person, including a student, of any electronic listening or recording device in any classroom without the prior consent of the instructor is prohibited, except as necessary to provide reasonable auxiliary aids and academic adjustments to disabled students. Any person, other than a student, who willfully violates this section shall be guilty of a misdemeanor. Any student violating this section shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action. This section shall not be construed as affecting the powers, rights, and liabilities arising from the use of electronic listening or recording devices as provided for by any other provision of law.

In Unity,

United Faculty