

SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES, HISTORY, AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

600 SOUTH MICHIGAN AVENUE
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March 27, 2014

Peter N. Kirstein, Ph.D.
Vice President A.A.U.P. III.
Chair: Illinois Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure Professor of
History Saint Xavier University

John K. Wilson
Editor, Illinois Academe (ilaaup.org)

Dear Peter and John:

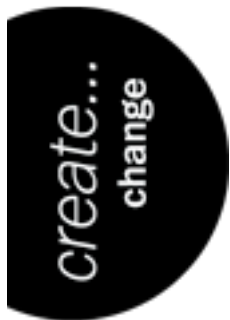
I am a strong supporter of the AAUP and a former elected union representative. For almost two decades, I was a union member at my previous institution of higher education and for several years served on the executive committee of the Worcester Chapter of the Massachusetts State College Association, an NEA affiliate. Given my history as a union advocate, I am very disappointed that the Illinois Chapter of the AAUP has decided to insert itself as it has in a labor grievance involving Instructor Iymen Chehade.

However, Dr. Pan Papacosta, the former President of the Illinois Chapter of the AAUP, informed me yesterday that your report is open to reconsideration and in order to prove that the claims against me are baseless, I offer a reply to the questions as you posed them to me in your e-mail. I am available for further discussion and clarification.

1) Your question: "Namely if the student complaint against Professor Chehade led to a cancellation of one of the sections of The Israeli/Palestinian Conflict?"

My answer: Absolutely not. Mr. Chehade had a second section of his Israeli/Palestinian Conflict class canceled on the Spring 2014 schedule due to low enrollment of the same class the previous spring. In the Spring 2013 semester he taught two sections of the class, one with 24 students, the other at half that number. I was instructed by my Dean, acting on an initiative from the Provost, to maintain class size by reducing courses with multiple sections or those unlikely to fill

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given the day and time scheduled. I cut four courses in the department in order to maintain my department's average class size of approximately 22 students per class; Mr. Chehade's second section of the class was one of those four cancelled.

In order to maintain his two-course teaching load, I offered him another class in his general area of training that was already on the books. My goal in this assignment was to preserve his teaching-load and the rotation of courses in keeping with the department's curriculum needs.

I must point out that reassigning Mr. Chehade a second class was in keeping with his own request, conveyed through his union to me. On Monday, November 4, 2013 (the day his second section was canceled), his union representative emailed me and stated that Mr. Chehade was "prepared to modify his teaching availability so that he can be assigned other history classes in the spring." This is precisely what I did and, as any neutral party can see, my actions were in line with Mr. Chehade's request.

It should be noted that Mr. Chehade never replied to the assignment offer for his second class. Not until the Step One grievance, months later, did he inform the College that he refused the class out of principle. He never indicated to me that he was unable to teach the second class as assigned. He has completed general graduate work in Middle Eastern and Ancient history and I assumed that he would be willing to take the reassigned class as he requested and conveyed to me through his union representative.

2) Your question: "... your characterisation of your meeting with Mr Chehade following the student complaint."

My answer: Our meeting was amicable and collegial, especially given the fact that we were (and remain) in complete agreement on the issue of fair and open dialogue in the classroom, especially when it comes to teaching complex material.

3) Your question: "Did you take a position on whether balance was an issue of concern?"

My answer: I never told Instructor Chehade to "balance" his class presentation of material. Any assertion that he was ordered to do so is not true.

4) Your question: "We are also curious if you asked the student if she or he



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had spoken to the instructor prior to speaking to you?"

My answer: I did ask the student. I also told the student that talking with Mr. Chehade is advisable if he/she felt comfortable doing so.

I would like to direct you to the College's reply to the Step One and Step Two grievances filed on behalf of Mr. Chehade by PFAC. They contain ample proof that no violation of academic freedom occurred.

I have ever confidence that you and the rest of Committee A are sincere in wanting to know "my side of the situation." I strongly assert that no violation of academic freedom has occurred. I urge the AAUP to respect the integrity of the concept by not conflating disputes over course assignments with the right of a professor, or in the case of Mr. Chehade, a part-time instructor, to teach courses as he or she best sees fit (which as I have advocated strongly on behalf of Mr. Chehade to do so).

Sincerely,

Steve



Steven H. Corey, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair

