

December 5, 2007

Louise Pagé-Valin
Associate Vice-President
Human Resources Services
University of Ottawa
Tabaret Hall
550 Cumberland Street
INTRA

Re: Grievance G-13 (my code); 39.4.2.2(b) November 16, 2007, letter of reprimand; FEC press release; continued harassment

Notice of grievance against the university's November 16, 2007, letter of reprimand and threat of dismissal and against the university's sustained and continuing harassment of Professor Denis Rancourt

This grievance is made public, in the interest of transparency and the public good.

Dear Mrs. Pagé-Valin:

SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

On April 30, 2007, the university cancelled my *Science in Society* course, which featured activists as guest speakers, and which was held in the largest auditorium on campus. On June 6, 2007, the Ottawa Freedom of Expression Committee, a campus-based organization, issued a public statement protesting the university's action as political repression. (<http://freedomofexpress.tripod.com>)

Almost three months later, the university suggested that I publicly denounce the Freedom of Expression Committee's statement.

The university has now taken a step toward firing me for not denouncing the Freedom of Expression Committee's statement. (Letter of reprimand dated November 16, 2007, signed by the dean of the Faculty of Science, André Lalonde, **attached**.)

I was happy that the Freedom of Expression Committee (FEC) criticized the cancellation of my course and I did not want to submit to the university's pressure to denounce the FEC. It is not my responsibility to criticize third parties on behalf of the university: I decide what political role I will play and I refused to be ordered in this way.

Because I had informed the university that I never had any intention of offering a course for credit that was not in my workload, or simply because it is impossible to offer a course for credit without the university's permission, the university could have issued a statement against possible misinterpretation of the FEC statement. But the university chose not to do so. "The university declined to comment yesterday." (*The Ottawa Sun*, June 7, 2007) If the university believed, as it now claims, that the FEC statement was somehow harmful, it could have issued its own statement but did not.

The letter of reprimand is part of a program of heavy handed suppression of public criticism of the university administration (see below). It is the hallmark of a repressive institution to attempt to silence its critics. It is a further hallmark of particularly repressive regimes to force denunciations of third parties.

The transcript of our meeting of August 27, 2007, makes all of this amply clear (39.4.2.1 meeting, transcript [attached](#)).

A formal grievance such as this one is the required first step to remove the university's letter of reprimand and threat of dismissal. I also ask that the university's reprimand be understood as part of a continuing and sustained harassment campaign against me and that reparations be made accordingly (see below): an unqualified written apology, monetary reparation to fund a student scholarship, and credit toward my next sabbatical leave for loss of professional development time.

DETAILS AND MORE SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

This grievance concerns a series of violations of the Collective Agreement culminating in the employer's 39.4.2.2 letter of reprimand dated November 16, 2007, concerning allegations related to a third-party (FEC) statement issued on June 6, 2007.

The many anomalies and violations of process and of substance of the Collective Agreement leading to the November 16, 2007, letter of reprimand are documented in part in two previous grievances ([attached](#)): my codes G-10 and G-12.

The November 16, 2007, letter of reprimand also must be understood in the broad context of sustained and continuing harassment by the employer, including alleged malfeasance by the President, that has been additionally documented in my previous grievances ([attached](#)) G-9 and G-11 (my codes).

The November 16, 2007, letter of reprimand is blatantly without merit. For example, the typical citizen and university students will have interpreted the FEC statement, as it was presumably intended by the FEC, to mean that a series of protests were being considered that could be held in the symbolic location of Tabaret Hall, the central administration building. Indeed, the media unambiguously reported it this way in an article with headline: "'Activism course' professor plots course of protest" (*The Ottawa Sun*, June 7, 2007, p.24; [attached](#)).

The employer insists on its interpretation that I personally intended to offer SCI 1101 (*Science in*

Society) for credit in defiance of my assigned 2007-2008 workload, something that is technically impossible to do and in spite of my clear statements to the opposite (see 39.4.2.1 meeting transcript, attached): "It's not my intention to give SCI-1101 in the fall, period. [...] it was never my intention to do that." The employer's position is disingenuous since the employer did not issue a public statement to express its position with respect to the FEC statement.

The employer's behaviour is an attempt to suppress and interfere with my academic freedom, which includes the right to be independently political, by attempting to force me to play a political role of its choosing. This shows a petty and regressive administration bent on image control and suppression of its critics, in a context where it feels it must justify its illegitimate decision (G-9, attached) to not offer SCI 1101 in 2007-2008, despite an original Senate Executive decision to do so and in the face of significant student interest and desire to register for the course.

REPARATIONS

- (1) I ask that the letter of reprimand and of threat be removed from my file.
- (2) I ask for an unqualified written apology from the employer for this element of harassment that is obviously without merit, signed by all university officers who played a role in the dean's action.
- (3) I ask that the general harassment and repression context be considered and evaluated in attributing me significant and fair monetary reparation, for loss of professional advancement, for pain and suffering, for unjust treatment, and for incidences of defamation.

I pledge to donate the entire latter amount to an independent scholarship or scholarship fund, to be jointly administered by several student groups or associations, for activist students and community members (such as members of the FEC) who have made particularly incisive and insightful criticisms of university governance and management and/or who have lead actions to make perceived institutional problems into public issues. This would be a small price to pay to nurture and encourage vigilant and independent criticism. It would also help make the needed activists of tomorrow.

- (4) To help in partially recovering lost time and lost research career advancement, I ask to be attributed four year-of-service credits toward my next sabbatical leave(s).

Sincerely,

Denis Rancourt
(Professor)

Attached supporting documents:

G-13-1	University's November 16, 2007, letter of reprimand	(1 page)
G-13-2	Official transcript of August 27, 2007, 39.4.2.1 meeting	(18 pages)
G-13-3	Grievance G-10, filed July 9, 2007	(26 pages)
G-13-4	Grievance G-12, filed September 17, 2007	(77 pages)
G-13-5	Grievance G-9, filed May 18, 2007	(12 pages)
G-13-6	Supporting documents for grievance G-9, sent July 16, 2007	(approx. 250 pages)
G-13-7	Grievance G-11, filed August 16, 2007	(84 pages)
G-13-8	Ottawa Sun article, June 7, 2007, issue	(1 page)