

December 13, 2007

Louise Pagé-Valin
Associate Vice-President
Human Resources Services
University of Ottawa
Tabaret Hall
550 Cumberland Street
(delivered by hand)

Grievance against the university's step toward firing a professor for using a teaching method that results in high student grades

Re: Grievance G-15 (my code); PHY 1722 W2007 grades too high; continued harassment by the university

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

Dear Mrs. Pagé-Valin:

On April 30, 2007, the university barred me from all three of the first-year physics and science courses that I developed, without discussing this with me, without providing an explanation, and despite overwhelming student and community interest in my courses and despite numerous letters of support.

Since the fall of 2005 when I gave a physics course in a novel (and highly successful) way, the so-called "activism course", the university has advanced a series of charges against me based on alleged infractions and using various unjustified pretexts. The university's treatment of me appears as punishment for using novel teaching methods, for my criticisms of the university and its administration, and for grieving the harassment itself.

One of the first-year physics courses that I developed was the new course PHY 1722 (first offered in winter 2006); the second-term of the first-year physics course for students in the life sciences. I gave this course with great success in the winter 2006 term, when the voluntary student attendance rate was an unprecedented 90% all term and where the students did better on their final exam than in any previous year in my 21 years teaching first-year physics, largely due to the novel teaching method that I implemented.

Now, the university has taken a step toward firing me because the student grades in PHY 1722, winter 2006, were higher than the student grades in the physics courses that I have taught in the

past. (Letter of reprimand dated November 22, 2007, signed by the dean of the Faculty of Science, André E. Lalonde, [attached](#).)

The November 22, 2007, letter of reprimand is without merit. Large differences in student grades between courses taught in different years do not, on their own, constitute valid grounds for the university to take a step toward firing a professor.

To have gone this route, in my opinion, shows malice, bad faith, and discrimination against me. The university's attack appears to be politically motivated to cover its past errors and violations, possibly in an effort to pressure me into a mediation that would trade off my valid complaints for essentially fabricated charges. It appears to be intended as intimidation and as a late-in-time tactic to protect President Patry and the university administration from my grievances for invalid disciplinary charges and for undue interference in my workload assignment for 2007-2008.

The transcript of our related meeting of August 27, 2007, makes some 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. The university's reprimand needs to be understood as part of a continuing and sustained harassment campaign against me (see below). I ask for reparations (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

Some of the anomalies and violations of the Collective Agreement that give the broad general context of sustained and continuing harassment by the university, accompanying the letter of reprimand of November 22, 2007, are documented in my previous grievances: G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, G-13, and G-14 (my codes, [attached](#)).

The November 22nd letter of reprimand is an example of abuse where the university has summarily filed a letter of reprimand and threat of dismissal without even responding to my related September 28, 2007, answer and invitation ([attached](#)) to have an informal and collegial discussion about PHY 1722 with the dean.

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 university 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 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)

See list of attachments on next page.
Cc: APUO, dean, open letter.

Attached supporting documents:

G-15-1	University's November 22, 2007, letter of reprimand	(1 page)
G-15-2	Official transcript of August 27, 2007, 39.4.2.1 meeting	(18 pages)
G-15-3	Grievance G-10, filed July 9, 2007	(26 pages)
G-15-4	Grievance G-12, filed September 17, 2007	(77 pages)
G-15-5	Grievance G-9, filed May 18, 2007	(12 pages)
G-15-6	Supporting documents for grievance G-9, sent July 16, 2007	(approx. 250 pages)
G-15-7	Grievance G-11, filed August 16, 2007	(84 pages)
G-15-8	Grievance G-13, filed December 5, 2007	(4 pages, excluding attachments)
G-15-9	Grievance G-14, filed December 10, 2007	(4 pages, excluding attachments)
G-15-10	A relevant email exchange: September 28 and 24, 2007	(2 pages)