

IU Administrators Are Using SEA 202 to Stifle Intellectual Diversity

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Last year, Indiana legislators passed SEA 202 in order to promote “intellectual diversity” at state educational institutions, but university administrators at Indiana University, Bloomington are using the law to do the opposite of what it was intended to do. The state law requires that university professors be disciplined or denied tenure and promotion if they fail to “foster a culture of free inquiry, free expression, and intellectual diversity.” However, in Professor Jessica Adams’ class for master’s students in the School of Social Work (SWK S507, “Diversity, Human Rights and Social Justice”), an SEA 202 complaint has resulted in the immediate removal of the professor from the class. As a result, students in her class have not had their instructor for more than a month.

According to the letter that Jessica Adams received from Carrie Docherty, Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs at Indiana University, Bloomington and Willie Miller, Associate Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs at Indiana University, Indianapolis, on October 6, Professor Adams “potentially violate[d] Indiana Code 21-39.5—State Educational Institutions: The Protection of Free Inquiry, Free Expression and Intellectual Diversity” because “it is alleged that during a class session of SWK S507, [she] spoke on White Supremacy and showed a graphic that listed Make American Great Again (MAGA) as worse than police killing people of color and stated that MAGA is socially unacceptable white supremacy.” According to Professor Adams, however, “The allegations are false. The graphic was misinterpreted despite there being an overview and explanation of the graphic offered in class. Instead of seeking clarification and discussion, a student used their misunderstanding to lodge a complaint.”

Before any investigation was conducted to assess the validity of this allegation, Miller and Docherty removed Professor Adams from her teaching duties in SWK S507 and prohibited her from contacting students from this course. The Deans of the School of Social Work conducted a preliminary interview with Professor Adams without disclosing the nature of the charges or the purpose of the interview, and then proceeded, inexplicably, to make themselves the primary complainant in the case, in a clear violation of conflict of interest and IUI procedures.

Administrators from the School of Social Work, Docherty and Miller claim to use the Indianapolis Faculty Council (IFC) policy on [Intellectual Diversity](#), the IFC procedures for [Intellectual Diversity-Related Complaints](#), and the [Academic Appointee Responsibilities and Conduct \(BOT-15\)](#), but they have not properly followed procedures laid by these policies. She has been denied right to counsel, the right to participate in evidence gathering and the right to avoid self-crimination; and she has been denied access to the identity of the complainant and evidence gathered.

Due process, the right to defend oneself against charges, is a crucial aspect of American justice, a cornerstone of functioning democracy, and is deeply embedded in American culture and society. The basic rights to hear the charges, to retain counsel, to face your accuser in an open and fair process, to participate as an equal partner in the quest for justice, to be shielded from self-incrimination, and to be privy to any and all information gathered, is the basic right of every citizen in our system of justice.

Professor Adams is not the only person whose rights have been violated in this case. Students from Adams' class have been deprived of their instructor, and they have not received clear communication from administrators from the School of Social Work regarding their class. They have not been informed of the reasons behind their instructor's removal, any potential replacement for their instructor, or how they will actually receive the education they were promised when they enrolled in this class. As a result, their access to "free inquiry" has been effectively barred from them. "We fear SB 202 is being used to target and punish our educators, all while the university systematically refuses to engage in transparency and due process to prove us wrong," said Jane Grady, one of the students in this class.

To more clearly understand the violation of faculty and students' rights in this case, the American Association of University Professors will host a press conference at 11am on November 7, Friday, near the Herman B. Wells statue at the Indiana University, Bloomington campus.

For more information, press only:

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