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August 21, 2025

[REDACTED]
Assistant Professor
[REDACTED]

Re: Notice of Discipline

Dear Professor [REDACTED]:

I write to communicate my decision regarding the findings and recommendations made by the Committee on Privilege and Tenure, Hearings Subcommittee, Davis Division of the Academic Senate, as reflected in the Panel Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations dated June 20, 2025, concerning the disciplinary action against you pursuant to Academic Personnel Manual (APM) 015, The Faculty Code of Conduct.

The Hearing Panel considered whether clear and convincing evidence established that you violated the Faculty Code of Conduct when, on October 10, 2023, you posted the following on your publicly available X page:

[REDACTED]

one group of ppl we have easy access to
in the US is all these zionist journalists
who spread propaganda &
misinformation

they have houses w addresses, kids in
school

they can fear their bosses, but they
should fear us more 🗡️🔴🔴🔴

Specifically, the Panel evaluated whether your post constituted unacceptable conduct that was not justified by the “Ethical Principles” of APM 015 with respect to Teaching and Students (Section II.A), The University (Section II.C), Colleagues (Section II.D) and/or The Community (Section II.E) and that significantly impaired the University’s central functions “to provide and sustain an environment conducive to sharing, extending, and critically examining knowledge and values, and to furthering the search for wisdom. They concluded that you violated the Faculty Code of Conduct as alleged. After consideration of the record and review of the report, I agree with the Hearing Panel’s conclusions as described below.

Failure to Meet the Ethical Principles Related to Students and Teaching

As the Hearing Panel's report details, APM 015 recognizes the University's need "to provide and sustain an environment conducive to sharing, extending and critically examining knowledge and values, and to furthering the search for wisdom." APM 015 permits the University to discipline certain faculty conduct that inhibits the University's ability to foster such an environment. Here, the Hearing Panel concluded that your conduct constituted "unacceptable faculty behavior" that did not meet those minimum standards, and I agree.

UC Davis professors' paramount responsibility to students is illustrated by the fact that the first section in APM 015's discussion of faculty "Professional Responsibilities, Ethical Principles, and Unacceptable Faculty Conduct" addresses "Teaching and Students." I concur with the Panel's conclusion that your conduct failed to meet your fundamental obligations to students.

First, the Panel recognized that, while reactions to your post varied, it had "violent elements, in that it specifically talked about finding people in their homes, and it implies that attacks against children would be justified." Many people reasonably took your post at face value or worried that it could inspire attacks on Zionists, Jews, or journalists. The Panel found that your post was inconsistent with the standards that govern teaching. Whereas APM 015 expects professors to demonstrate respect for students, recognize power imbalances, and protect students from activities that can interfere with learning, your post caused specific students profound distress. Student witnesses detailed how your post compounded their suffering and impacted their lives during an already unsettling period. They described student organizations hiring extra security and individual students avoiding campus, leaving town, or purchasing a weapon because they felt unsafe.

The Panel's assessment of the inconsistency between your actions and your obligations to students aligned with the preceding investigation. The investigators also noted the tension between your role and your decision "to publicly post something that could reasonably be interpreted to be antisemitic and as either a call to, or encouragement of violence" in response to others' beliefs. The Hearing Panel amplified the investigators' concern that "[w]hen people are afraid for their safety or feel that they are being attacked for their ethnicity or political and/or religious beliefs, that is not an environment in which they will be comfortable learning or sharing their ideas."

Failure to Meet the Ethical Principles Related to the University

The Panel also found that your post "contravened the Ethical Principles that cover a faculty member's relationship to the University." Specifically, the Panel concluded that your "post caused a vast swath of University personnel to be 'upset and concerned and in pain' and inflicted 'serious damage . . . on the educational community.'" For example, at least two staff members cited the impact of your actions in resigning from their positions. Given that conduct, the Panel reasonably concluded that you had failed to meet the standard for faculty members to be "effective teachers and scholars" who recognize their "responsibilities within their institution."

Failure to Meet the Ethical Principles Related to Colleagues

I also agree with the Panel that your post did not meet the APM 015 standards applicable to interactions with your colleagues. The Panel concluded that your actions took a substantial toll on both your department and its then-Chair, including leading to your Chair's resignation from that role. In addition, another faculty member in your building perceived your post as a threat and was sufficiently alarmed that she reported it to both the police and to the Harassment & Discrimination Assistance and Prevention Program.

Failure to Meet the Ethical Principles Related to the Community

Your use of your AMS faculty webpage photo for your X account allowed individuals to conclusively establish that your offensive commentary was posted by a UC Davis faculty member. The Panel concluded that the public outrage directed at the department and the University reflected that people connected your words to your University role. In that way, the Panel reasonably concluded that your actions conflicted with your APM 015 obligations to the community.

Impairment of the University's Central Functions

Even when a faculty member has failed to meet the Ethical Principles in multiple ways, as occurred here, their conduct must also "significantly impair the University's central functions" to be subject to discipline under APM 015. I agree with the Panel's conclusion that your conduct satisfied that standard. The Panel noted that your "words and emojis terrified students and colleagues, sent [your department] into a tailspin, damaged the University's reputation, imperiled its fundraising, and likely had other ripple effects on campus." For these reasons, the Panel found that your post met the standard set in *Pickering v. Bd. of Ed. of Twp. High Sch. Dist. 205, Will County, Illinois*, 391 U.S. 563, 568 (1968), which established a balancing test for when a public employer's interest in "promoting the efficiency of the public services it performs" outweighs the interests of a public employee to comment in a particular manner upon matters of public concern. Here, the Panel found that the "tremendously disruptive" impact of your post outweighed your free speech rights and justified discipline.

Although neither APM 015 nor the *Pickering* standard specifically focuses on the foreseeability of disruption stemming from faculty speech, I feel compelled to note my specific concern that you chose to post a message stating that parents who have "kids in school" should fear you and unnamed others, followed by a series of emojis featuring weapons and blood. It is unsurprising that such a public posting from an educator would cause pervasive alarm and disruption within our community.

Disciplinary Sanction

The Hearing Panel recommended that a Letter of Censure be placed in your file as proposed in the charging letter. That letter stated:

Specifically, because your misconduct relates to the area of teaching and mentoring of students, a copy of the Letter of Censure will be placed in the academic review file of your current, pending promotion case and will remain in your academic review file until such time as you are promoted to associate professor. A copy of

this letter also will be maintained in a confidential file maintained in the Office of the Vice Provost-Academic Affairs.

I agree with the Panel's conclusion that a Letter of Censure is appropriate. Accordingly, the accompanying Letter of Censure will immediately be placed in your academic review file and in your Academic Affairs file.

The Panel did not recommend that the University suspend you for a quarter without pay. They found that your "lack of intent to cause harm and the terrible real-world consequences [you had] already experienced" mitigated against a financial punishment. In this one area, I respectfully disagree.

While I recognize and regret that you also experienced significant personal consequences because of your actions, I noted with deep concern that both the investigators and the Hearing Panel found that you failed to acknowledge the deep pain and significant disruption you had caused others in the University community. Both found that you failed to offer clarification or apology that could have mitigated the impacts of your actions on the University community. The Panel expressly found that you tried to "minimize the effect of [your] post" in downplaying its impacts on your department. The report cited the investigators' findings that you "failed to reckon with the suffering of others that the post caused" and "view[yourself] as the sole victim in this situation." The Panel also observed that, at the hearing, your statements focused on the harm you have experienced due to your post and a politically motivated effort to publicize it. As the Panel stated, "it is hard to grasp how Professor [REDACTED] could sit through six days of wrenching testimony during this hearing and not be sorry for the widespread pain the post caused." Particularly where students were among those who suffered as a result of your actions, your glaring lack of insight into the harm you caused is in direct conflict with your obligation to protect and preserve conditions hospitable to student learning.

For these reasons, I believe that a Letter of Censure plus a Suspension Without Pay is appropriate discipline. As you know, the proposed discipline prior to the Committee on Privilege and Tenure hearing was a suspension without pay for one academic quarter. I believe the hearing record justifies that serious sanction. For that reason, I am issuing a sanction of Suspension for the period from October 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025. As an Academic Year faculty member, a portion of your fall salary is prepaid during the summer months, and a one-quarter pay sanction would have equated to one third of your work time and annual salary. After reviewing the Panel report, considering the diligence of the Panel's review, and consulting with the Chair of the Committee on Privilege and Tenure under Academic Senate Bylaw 334.C, I have decided that the University will withhold your October 1, 2025 and November 1, 2025 paychecks but will not seek to recover from you the salary that was prepaid toward your fall effort during the summer months. [REDACTED]

I wish to stress that you should not engage in any behavior that could be perceived as retaliatory against anyone that you believe has participated in any way in this investigation or hearing. Retaliation includes threats, intimidation, reprisals and/or adverse actions related to employment or education, or any conduct that might discourage anyone from coming forward

Assistant Professor [REDACTED]

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to report misconduct. Please be aware that the University takes very seriously allegations of retaliation and, if found to be substantiated, such violations could result in serious disciplinary sanctions.

In closing, I would like to remind you that I consider your misconduct in this matter to be very concerning and will pursue further discipline should you be found to have engaged in similar misconduct again in the future. At the same time, I am hopeful that you are capable of amending your behavior and of conducting yourself in a manner that complies with the Faculty Code of Conduct.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary S. May". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gary S. May
Chancellor

- c: Noah Guynn, Associate Dean of the Faculty in the Humanities, Arts and Cultural Studies
Corrie Decker, Chair, Department of American Studies
Director Paul E. Harris, Office of Academic Affairs