



Jury Rules for Christian Professor in Case Against University

A jury in North Carolina has ruled that officials at University of North Carolina-Wilmington retaliated against one of the school's professors, a former atheist, because of his Christian views.

In 1993 UNC-Wilmington hired Mike Adams, who has a Ph.D., as an assistant professor of criminology, promoting him to associate professor in 1998. Adams, who frequently received professional accolades from his colleagues, was also an avowed atheist. That all changed in 2000, however, when he converted to Christianity, a transformation that dramatically impacted his views on political and social issues.



Dr. Adams' conversion also marked the beginning of a change in the attitude of colleagues and administration toward him. According to Adams, after his conversion the university began to target him with a campaign of academic persecution that culminated in his denial of promotion to full professor, despite an award-winning record of teaching, research, and scholarly publication.

In 2007 [Alliance Defending Freedom](#) (ADF), a conservative legal advocacy group, filed suit against the university on behalf of Adams, arguing that Adams was denied the well-deserved promotion because a nationally syndicated opinion column he wrote took the wrong viewpoint on religious and political issues.

According to the ADF, in 2004 the university's interim chair of the department of sociology and criminal justice Dr. Diane Levy (notorious as an outspoken feminist with decidedly leftist leanings) "raised concerns about Adams' 'political activity,' and reprimanded him for his weekly nationally syndicated column."

In 2005, Levy was replaced as department chair by Dr. Kimberly J. Cook, also an outspoken feminist who was openly critical of the Christian faith. According to the ADF, Cook once "described to a recruitment committee her ideal candidate for a teaching position as 'a lesbian with spiked hair and a dog collar.'"

In 2006, upon the completion of his 11th peer-reviewed scholarly publication, Adams applied for promotion to full professorship. But during a closed-door meeting, "Cook and senior faculty members decided not to promote Adams," reported ADF, an action that prompted Adams and the ADF to file suit for discrimination.

In 2008 a federal court [denied the university's motion](#) to have the lawsuit dismissed, ruling that Adams had raised some serious and legitimate claims against the school over its decision to deny him a full professorship. In 2010 a federal court ruled in favor of the school in its efforts to stop the suit,



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prompting the ADF to appeal the case to the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. That court ruled in favor of Adams, noting that “no individual loses his ability to speak as a private citizen by virtue of public employment.... Adams’ columns addressed topics such as academic freedom, civil rights, campus culture, sex, feminism, abortion, homosexuality, religion, and morality. Such topics plainly touched on issues of public, rather than private, concern.” The appeals court sent the case back to the lower court, which determined that there was sufficient cause for a jury trial.

On March 20, six years after the suit was first filed, a jury ruled that UNC-Wilmington was indeed guilty of retaliation against Adams over his religious and political views. “Universities are supposed to be a marketplace of ideas, not a place where professors face retaliation for having a different view than university officials,” said ADF attorney Travis Barham concerning the case. “Disagreeing with an accomplished professor’s religious and political views is no grounds for denying him a promotion. As the 4th Circuit affirmed, protecting academic freedom for university professors is critical, and opinion columns are among the purest examples of free speech that the First Amendment protects.”

Following the verdict Barham said that Adams and the ADF were “grateful that the jury today reaffirmed the fundamental principle that universities are a marketplace of ideas, not a place where professors face retaliation for having a different view than university officials.”

In 2013, [Adams responded](#) to accusations from school officials that he was the “biggest embarrassment to higher education in America,” with an open letter in which he challenged, “I don’t even think I’m the biggest embarrassment to higher education in the state of North Carolina.” He then went on to catalog a number of truly outrageous programs and projects that had been perpetrated on the state by its higher academic community. While some of them are too vulgar to recount in these pages, just one example will suffice to prove that the state’s universities have far more serious issues than one lone professor speaking out on behalf of conservative, Christian values.

“In the early spring semester of 2013,” recalled Adams, “a women’s studies professor and a psychology professor at Western Carolina University co-sponsored a panel on bondage and S&M. The purpose of the panel was to teach college students how to inflict pain on themselves and others for sexual pleasure.” With a touch of dry humor Adams pointed out to the university that “when you called me the biggest embarrassment in higher education, you must not have known about their bondage panel. Maybe you were tied up that evening and couldn’t make it.”



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