

# MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Dr. Selman Akbulut  
C335 Wells Hall  
[akbulut@math.msu.edu](mailto:akbulut@math.msu.edu)

April 9, 2018

Dear Professor Akbulut,

This is a written notice of intent to impose serious discipline for your targeting of faculty who have served in administrative review of the January 30, 2015 finding outlining your Abrogation of Duty. You have seven (7) days to respond in writing or to request a meeting with the disciplinary review panel of the University Committee of Faculty Affairs.

## Background

Your graduate class MTH 996.002 was canceled for under-enrollment on Oct 21, 2014 and you were assigned a replacement course for the Spring 2015 semester. You disputed the basis for the course cancellation and refused to teach the replacement course. As a result of this refusal on January 30, 2015 the Office of the Provost found you in abrogation of your teaching responsibility and reduced your salary for the term. You filed complaint with the Faculty Grievance Officer on Feb 18, 2015, who dismissed it stating that the “grievance does not contain a reasonably accurate statement of facts relevant to the complaint.” The University Jurisdictional Appeals panel upheld this decision on April 7, 2015. You added a motion on the course cancellation to the agenda of the Mathematics Department meeting of May 5, 2015. This motion was discussed and disapproved by majority vote. On Feb 11, 2016 you requested an Administrative Review of the process of your course cancellation. This was conducted by a subcommittee formed from the advisory committee of the Department of Mathematics which concluded that “the letter of reprimand sent to Prof. Akbulut by the Office of the Provost in January 2015 and the subsequent withholding of 10% of his salary was justified.” This finding was reviewed and supported by me, and by appeal to the Dean of the College of Natural Science. This last decision exhausted the process of appeal within the University Administrative Review process. You submitted a motion on the course cancellation to the agenda of the Mathematics Department meeting of May 3, 2016; your motion was stricken from the agenda by majority vote.

After these events you engaged in an email campaign designed to impugn the character of those who participated in the administrative review. This is a process I call targeting. On November 14, 2017 you received a disciplinary warning instructing you to refrain from emails and web page postings that engage in targeting. A follow-up meeting was held with Prof. Tom Tomlinson, chair of the UCFA, at which the issues of targeting emails and web page content were discussed. On Jan 22, 2018 you received a formal written reprimand for your refusal to remove the items and links from your department supported personal web page. You continued to send targeting emails after the warning of Nov 14, specifically on Dec 25, 2017, on Jan 22, 2018 at 8:30am, on Jan 22, 2018 at 11:39am and



## Department of Mathematics

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on Jan 24, 2018 at 12:10am. These last two emails were sent after the receipt of the letter of reprimand that reiterated the possible consequences of continued targeting emails. Even more concerning is your email of Jan 25, 2018, sent to the current mathematics advisory committee, implying unspecified consequences should they engage in administrative review actions. On Jan 24, 2018 I offered to arrange a second meeting with Prof. Tomlinson to pursue an understanding that would prevent further infractions. You declined this request for a meeting.

On January 30, 2018 I send you a notice of an impending additional disciplinary action for this behavior, admonishing you that your current behavior was leading to serious discipline. You sent subsequent emails on January 30 and February 2 that engaged in targeting behavior. The emails imply you have contacted the president of the American Mathematical Society and the National Science Foundation with your concerns. They indicate that you will not desist in this behavior until you achieve the outcome you desire. In February 2018 the Faculty Grievance Officer William Donahue attempt to arrange for an external mediation process. You rejected this offer.

Given the threats you have made to the Mathematics Advisory Committee, interim Dean Cheryl Sisk arranged an ad hoc comprised of full professors from departments within the College of Natural Science other than mathematics. The committee reviewed materials summarizing your behavior. On March 21, 2018 the committee unanimously recommended for pursuit of serious discipline.

### **Serious Discipline**

Your persistent and continued attacks against your colleagues and the department cannot continue. Your actions are disruptive to the department and create an atmosphere of fear and hostility for faculty who have engaged in good faith in the governance process. We have attempted to mediate this matter with you, even long after you have exhausted your internal avenues to challenge the abrogation of duties decision. You have had three years to express your point of view on this matter. Given the disruptive nature of your communications, I am directing that you cease all further communications with faculty, staff, or students in the department about the January 30, 2015 abrogation of duties decision or their participation in the administrative review of that decision.

Consistent with the Discipline and Dismissal of Tenured Faculty for Cause Policy, I have conferred with the Dean and the Office of the Provost regarding the proposed serious discipline. That serious discipline will consist of a one-semester suspension without pay and a zero raise for the upcoming raise cycle. Any additional infractions may lead to initiation of dismissal for cause proceedings.

The procedure for discipline of tenured faculty can be found in the MSU Faculty Handbook under Section IV Academic Human Resources Policies: Discipline and

Dismissal of Tenured Faculty for Cause, and can be accessed at the URL  
[https://www.hr.msu.edu/policies-procedures/faculty-academic-staff/faculty-handbook/tenure\\_discipline\\_dismissal.html](https://www.hr.msu.edu/policies-procedures/faculty-academic-staff/faculty-handbook/tenure_discipline_dismissal.html) .

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Keith Promislow  
Chair, Department of Mathematics