



The Society for the Study of Social Problems

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October 20, 2017

Dr. M. Brian Blake, Provost
Drexel University
3141 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Dear Provost Blake:

We are writing on behalf of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP), one of the oldest and most respected social science organizations in the United States, to express concern regarding the suspension of Professor George Ciccariello-Maher on October 9, 2017. We are especially concerned because of recent attempts by some individuals and groups to suppress the free expression of ideas by faculty whom they oppose on ideological grounds and with the appearance of institutions of higher education allowing themselves to be influenced, if not bullied, by these opponents of free speech, academic freedom, and due process. Dr. Ciccariello-Maher is entitled to all three, and if a review by the appropriate faculty channels was not conducted prior to his suspension, we urge you to reinstate Dr. Ciccariello-Maher immediately and thereby allow him to rejoin his students in the classroom.

We have read the letter sent to you by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) on October 12, 2017, and share the organization's position regarding Professor Ciccariello-Maher; and therefore, urge you to give serious consideration to the points raised and recommendations made by the AAUP. Suspending someone is a very serious action and should be taken only in cases where there is clear and verifiable misconduct or a clear and strong possibility of immediate harm to the individual and others. A person's career and reputation can be damaged by this kind of an action, sometimes irreparably, even if it is determined that the suspension was unwarranted.

The issue for us is protecting Dr. Ciccariello-Maher's free speech and due process rights, and preventing groups antithetical to these values and rights from intimidating institutions into taking actions that undermine long-standing and essential values and rights *required* for scholarship and learning to flourish. Our experience is that it does not take very much, especially in this political climate, for groups to threaten the life or livelihood of people with whom they disagree. But when it does occur, instead of being intimidated by these threats, and thereby inviting more of them in the future, we should take the opportunity to provide the leadership and resolve sorely lacking at a moment when the United States is as divided as it is along racial and ethnic lines.

If there is information we do not have that you believe will improve our understanding of the situation, we would appreciate receiving it. Either way, we join the AAUP in urging you to consult with the appropriate faculty body or bodies, and Dr. Ciccariello-Maher, to determine what steps need to be taken to resolve this matter and to notify Dr. Ciccariello-Maher as quickly as possible of your decision and the rationale behind it. We hope that Dr. Ciccariello-Maher will be fully reinstated and allowed to return to the classroom as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Luis A. Fernandez, Ph.D.
President, Board of Directors



Héctor L. Delgado, Ph.D.
Executive Officer



David G. Embrick, Ph.D.
Vice-President, Board of Directors

Cc: Dr. Donna Murasko, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Dr. George Ciccariello-Maher