

Disciplinary Action against Me by My University

**Document 8: Email Message to Union Representatives**

**What is at stake for the Saint Mary's community**

Mark Mercer

Tue 3/2/2021 9:54 PM

To: The two members of the union executive involved in my case

Cc: Carol Crosson

[Names redacted],

I want to explain why it is important that the university apply no discipline against me for my having sent an email message on 23 and 30 October that I'm told upset some people.

First, in disciplining me, the university would be violating my academic freedom to communicate my ideas with whomever I wish.

As a violation of my academic freedom, it would set a precedent whereby other professors could be disciplined for exercising their academic freedom to speak their minds frankly. Professors generally would want to be careful not to upset people by what they say, and that would hinder them in the roles as researchers, teachers and caretakers of intellectual life in their university and the wider society.

My message was not rude, abusive or threatening.

Disciplining me would set the stage for the university's trying to affirm the false and obnoxious doctrine that particular people uttering a particular word are engaging in anti-black racism. That would damage academic freedom by making us all beholden to a piece of prescribed doctrine. It would also prevent us from being candid and direct in teaching.

Second, in disciplining me for the fact that some people were upset by my message, the university would be interposing itself between people whom we should suppose are competent adults able to deal with discomfort themselves. It would, that is, feed into a culture of complaining to authorities. Such a culture is inconsistent with a university culture of intellectual and moral autonomy and direct relations between equal members.

There is much that professors, students and other members of the university community have to lose in this case. The university cannot be allowed to infringe on my academic freedom and, thereby, limit academic freedom and deform university culture.

All the best,

Mark

**[As of 14 March 2021, I have received no reply to this message.]**