

UCWAZ CWA Local 7065 Official Statement on the Incident at the University of Oklahoma



Stop the Harassment and Let Teachers Teach

Approved by the UCWAZ Executive Committee and released publicly on Monday, December 15th.

In a [recent incident](#) at the University of Oklahoma (OU), an instructor was targeted after a student earned a low grade on an essay. The instructor clearly indicated the reasons for the grade – the essay “does not answer the questions for [the] assignment, contradicts itself, heavily uses personal ideology over empirical evidence in a scientific class, and is at times offensive.” Since the essay heavily referenced religion, the instructor clarified, “I am not deducting points because you have certain beliefs.” The student filed a discrimination complaint with OU, and meanwhile, their local TPUSA chapter launched an online harassment campaign. OU placed the instructor on administrative leave.

As educators, we value every student’s perspective and would never justify a low grade on the basis of religious or ideological belief. It is our job to communicate the standards of our discipline and conventions of academic writing. The instructor went above and beyond her duty by providing thoughtful and detailed feedback to the student’s essay. Nonetheless, political actors are using the incident to further a nationwide attack on higher education.

This is one of many recent examples of coordinated harassment against individual teachers. Targets are often selected on the basis of their gender, race, sexuality, and political beliefs. In this recent incident at OU, the instructor was targeted because she is transgender. We have been compelled on [more than one](#) occasion to respond to such incidents on Arizona campuses. UCWAZ stands in solidarity with teachers everywhere conscientiously doing their jobs. Every one of us has feared that at some point they might be targeted by an aggrieved student – or even a national political apparatus – for simply teaching to the standards of our field.

We recognize what this threat means in light of the [Trump administration’s higher education policy](#). While Trump’s higher education compact touts a “vibrant marketplace of ideas,” this incident confirms to us what we always knew the compact meant: [the end of academic freedom](#). The compact must be rejected in its entirety. We also call on university administrators to recognize UCWAZ and negotiate with workers



and students who envision a higher education system that is free and accessible to all, provides job security and thriving wages, and defends academic freedom.

We invite all who share our commitment to organize with us through these concrete actions:

- [Join your union](#) or become a community supporter
- Talk to your fellow workers about organizing your department
- Stay informed and follow us social media

In solidarity,

Your Union, United Campus Workers of Arizona CWA Local 7065

