

July 12, 2000

Department of Psychology
Oregon State University
Corvallis OR 197331

To the Members of the Psychology Department:



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We would like to express our concerns regarding the recent series of attacks made by Associate Professor Lawrence Ryan against Assistant Professor Bob Uttl. Dr. Uttl believes these attacks to be unfair and potentially damaging to his future career, and has asked the Department Chair John Gillis to put something in writing that will protect him from further attacks and damage. Dr. Gillis has provided no written documentation and thus Dr. Uttl remains vulnerable. In such cases, a faculty member can take his/her problem to the Executive Committee, but this option has been closed due to Dr. Ryan's presence on that committee. We therefore feel it necessary to provide written support for Dr. Uttl from the Department's senior faculty.

Dr. Ryan first attacked Dr. Uttl for submitting a grant to refurbish the computer laboratory. Dr. Ryan claimed that the grant was not made available to him for review and comment. His attack escalated into a series of disrespectful emails distributed to the entire faculty. The emails included multiple false accusations (e.g. "The grant essentially is an end run around normal departmental decision making") and derogatory claims (e.g., "This is one of the most arrogant and unprofessional acts I can recall being committed by a faculty member in this department since I've been here"). Dr. Ryan claimed that departmental procedures were being violated, and distributed copies of the departmental bylaws as putative proof.

We can find no objective grounds for Dr. Ryan's accusations. Regarding the claim that the grant was not made available to him, the proposal was made available to the entire faculty and discussed at a faculty meeting prior to its submission. Regarding the claims of arrogance and unprofessionalism, Dr. Uttl was only trying to help the department in acquiring computers. His efforts to rebuild the student laboratory are commendable and go beyond any previous faculty initiatives. Regarding the accusation that this was an end run around the department, computers are part of the Budget Committee's portfolio. Not only is Dr. Uttl a member of the Budget Committee, but he was given this specific charge by the Department's Chair. As for the departmental bylaws, there is absolutely nothing relevant in the document Dr. Ryan distributed. No departmental procedures were violated.

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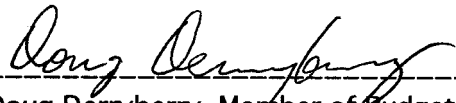
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Later in the term, Dr. Ryan again attacked Dr. Uttl for events surrounding Dr. Uttl's request for information regarding the computer equipment Dr. Ryan preferred. Apparently, an initial email had been lost, leading to a misunderstanding regarding how many requests Dr. Uttl had made. Dr. Ryan also objected to the tone of the request and questioned Dr. Uttl's authority in requesting the information. As a result, Dr. Ryan referred to Dr. Uttl as "arrogant", "unprofessional", "condescending", and deceptive. Moreover, Dr. Ryan requested that the Chair and the Dean initiate a Formal Reprimand of Dr. Uttl on the grounds of "lying" and "harassment". This request has recently been "temporarily withdrawn".

Again, we can find no grounds for Dr. Ryan's attacks. Regarding Dr. Uttl's "authority" in requesting the information, he was again acting as a member of the Budget Committee on specific instructions from the Chair. The alleged "lies" seem to stem from Dr. Uttl's statement of having to send the email "repeatedly". If an email gets lost, the sender has no way of knowing this, and Dr. Ryan never did provide the requested information. Regarding the email's content, it contained nothing that could reasonably be interpreted as condescension or arrogance. The email was a humorous and rather helpful request. Finally, we do not understand why a request for information should be viewed as harassment, and cannot imagine more trivial grounds for a Formal Reprimand.

We also note that Dr. Uttl responded patiently and professionally in the face of these attacks. He even offered to drive to Eugene (where Dr. Ryan resides) to discuss the issues over a beer.

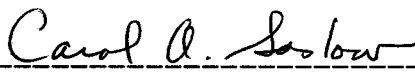
In conclusion, we stand behind Dr. Uttl and give him our strongest support. We reassure him that he is a welcome and valuable member of the Psychology Department. We request that the Chair place this letter of support in Dr. Uttl's permanent file within the Psychology Department. We sincerely hope that such groundless accusations stop. Otherwise, it may become advisable that Dr. Ryan recuse himself from involvement in any future evaluations of Dr. Uttl.



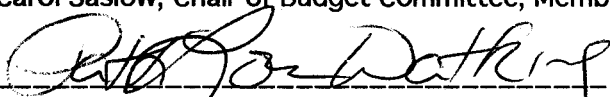
Doug Derryberry, Member of Budget Committee



Marjorie Reed, Member of Curriculum Committee



Carol Saslow, Chair of Budget Committee, Member of Executive Committee



Patti Watkins, Member of Personnel Committee