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SANTA BARBARA • SANTA CRUZ

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Allan Rock
President's Office
University of Ottawa
550 Cumberland Street
Ottawa, ON, K1N 6N5

cc: Prof. Denis Rancourt, U of Ottawa
cc: Prof. Claude Lamontagne, U of Ottawa
cc: Mr. Philippe Marchand, Berkeley
cc: Dr. James Turk, CAUT
cc: Mr. Marc Jolicoeur, BOG Chair, UofO

FAX: 613-562-5103

Via email: allan.rock@uottawa.ca

Dear President Rock,

I have followed with dismay the proceedings of your administration, over the last year, aimed most currently at revoking Prof. Denis Rancourt's tenure at the University of Ottawa. It is difficult for me to understand that a distinguished academic of Prof. Rancourt's caliber would be threatened with such action, harassed to the point of suspension and denial of access to campus and generally not embraced for what he is; a brilliant researcher, an indefatigable innovator and a committed educator within and outside the university. There can be no justification for the treatment of Prof. Rancourt, certainly not in a cursory and apparently misinformed evaluation of his grading method. I write to you to express my alarm at this, a threat to some of the most basic foundations of academic life, and to beseech you to redress the damage already caused to Prof. Rancourt, his career, your university and the academic system in general. Your actions in this case, President Rock, will be monitored far and wide in the academic community and I trust that history will side with Prof. Rancourt's decision to stand by his principles which are, as far as I can ascertain, those principles shared by us all in academe.

There is no doubt about Prof. Rancourt's capacity as a researcher and educator, or about his important service role for the community in Ottawa and beyond. His incontrovertible recognitions throughout his career precede him in the international scientific community, so I do not need to belabor any point about his competence. I am, however, myself a very direct beneficiary of a unique quality in Prof. Rancourt which is rare among his peers, his capacity to work interdisciplinarily and to break the boundaries of research and education so as to produce highly qualified young researchers that are able not only to master the details of a theoretical field, but to access whatever intellectual tools are needed to address real-life problems. I recently admitted one of these unique students of Prof. Rancourt's, Mr. Philippe Marchand, as a graduate student into our programme. Philippe evinced such high standards of scientific training even from his application to Berkeley that he quickly rose to the top of our candidate list and earned highly coveted departmental funding. But perhaps the most striking quality in this young researcher is his willingness and capacity to breach across the boundaries of his training in Physics and undertake work in one of the US's most demanding programs in Biology and Environmental Science. So far, every teacher I have interviewed about Philippe's performance in courses ranging from Population Genetics to Biogeochemistry coincides in ranking him as "outstanding" or simply "ahead of everyone in the course". Independently of his own personal qualities, Mr. Marchand is quick to recognize the critical guidance and mentorship role played by Prof. Rancourt in achieving both the

knowledge as well as the poise to undertake this intellectual feat, one that I know many much more seasoned researchers would have avoided.

If I am to judge from the products of Prof. Rancourt's teaching methods, i.e. his own students, then I do not think there is any question that he has certainly utilized his decades-long career well. To the extent that his grading methods are an integral part of his approach, I would posit without a doubt that we should all undertake a careful evaluation of what Prof. Rancourt has been pioneering at Ottawa. I would expect that the administrators at the University of Ottawa would undertake an admiring and careful review of Prof. Rancourt's proposals. Instead, a wrong-headed and myopic campaign against him seems to be in full course. It is not too late, President Rock, to reverse bearings in this unique case; your administrators in the Faculty of Science have chosen to make a test of it, and the world of academia is waiting for you and your Board of Governors to see right from wrong and reinstate Prof. Rancourt to his rightful place as a cherished researcher and teacher.

I would expect a response from you to this letter, clarifying the extremely alarming situation surrounding this case. I would also appreciate being kept abreast of your decisions on Prof. Rancourt's case at my email address above.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "I. Chapela". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "I" and a long, sweeping underline.

Ignacio H. Chapela
Associate Professor (Microbial Ecology)
University of California, Berkeley