

PSC/CUNY Professional Staff Congress/City University of New York

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October 15, 2024

Chancellor Chancellor Felix Matos Rodríguez
City University of New York
205 E. 42nd St.
New York, NY 10017

President Frank Wu
Queens College, CUNY
65-30 Kissena Blvd.
Flushing, NY 11367

Dear Chancellor Matos Rodríguez and President Wu,

The October 9 [social media attack](#) by a U.S. Congressman on a Queens College faculty member is intolerable to the PSC and should be intolerable to the administration. We call on you to forcefully condemn the Ritchie Torres doxing tweet, which endangers your employee and your students by publicizing the location of the classroom and the zoom link for online participants. CUNY “does not condone the act of doxing any member of its community,” according to the administration’s [Doxing Resource Guide](#), and Torres has engaged in a clear, textbook case. “Where doxing is perpetrated by external organizations or individuals,” your guidance continues, “CUNY’s options to address the conduct are limited, but we remain committed to supporting the CUNY community as best we can.” You must make good on that commitment.

From his personal Twitter/X account, Torres posted unredacted syllabus information and a photo of the instructor engaged in a lesson because he objects to her using materials that call Israel’s military action in Gaza a “genocide,” especially on the one-year anniversary of the Hamas attack on Israeli civilians. Torres seeks to punish this faculty member and make her fearful but also to chill academic freedom at Queens College and CUNY. He calls the faculty member “a propagandist pretending to be a professor,” an extremist right-wing talking point that Congressional Republicans have promulgated in the name of combating antisemitism. Torres claims that a Women and Gender Studies course is not the place for students to discuss the war in Gaza, that using the term “genocide” to describe Israel’s conduct in that war is antisemitic and hateful, and that Academic Freedom should extend only to certain days of the year and certain faculty members.

The PSC fully understands the university’s obligations under federal Title VI and recognizes that academic freedom comes with corresponding responsibilities and limitations.¹ But silence in the face of the Torres tweet compounds the administration’s silence in response to other blatant threats to academic freedom, including the doxing trucks at Hunter College and the Law School, and City Council member Inna Vernikov’s pistol brandishing at a student protest of the war in Gaza. It signals accommodation to those who endanger critics of Israeli state policy in the CUNY community.

Academic freedom is the cornerstone of a university. The evaluation of our teaching and research is conducted by academics and subject matter experts, not by politicians. The procedures are formalized in the university’s governance documents and the PSC-CUNY collective bargaining

¹The AAUP 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure says, “Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject.” The Association clarified in 1970: “The intent of this statement is not to discourage what is ‘controversial.’ Controversy is at the heart of the free academic inquiry which the entire statement is designed to foster. The passage serves to underscore the need for teachers to avoid persistently intruding material which has no relation to their subject.”



agreement, the preamble to which says, "CUNY and the PSC seek to maintain and encourage, in accordance with law, full freedom of inquiry, teaching, research and publication of results, the parties subscribe to Academic Freedom for faculty members." Indeed, the agreement recognizes that academic freedom extends beyond classroom faculty because it follows function not title. "The principles of Academic Freedom are recognized as applicable to other members of the Instructional Staff, to the extent that their duties include teaching, research and publication of results, the selection of library or other educational materials or the formation of academic policy."

Only a forthright condemnation by your administration of the practices of public shaming and doxing will deter the ongoing efforts to deprofessionalize our work and curb academic freedom at CUNY.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "J Davis".

James Davis, President
Professional Staff Congress