

Renowned Prof Challenges Religion-Inspired Promotion Denial

A former atheist is on the offense against a major university that he claims denied him a due promotion because he confesses Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

Mike Adams, a criminology professor at the University of North Carolina-Wilmington (UNCW), is fighting back against what he sees as an unconstitutional move. He argues that his promotion was denied because his application referenced his nationally syndicated opinion columns that espoused religious and political views university officials don't agree with.

Alliance Defense Fund Senior Counsel David French will offer oral arguments at a hearing in Adams v. Board of Trustees of the UNCW on Wednesday. The hearing is an appeal of an unfavorable lower court decision against Adams.

"Christian professors should not be discriminated against because of their beliefs. Disagreeing with an accomplished professor's religious and political views is no grounds for refusing him promotion," says French. "Opinion columns are some of the clearest examples of free speech protected by the First Amendment. Mentioning them on a promotion application does not change that."

A former atheist, Adams frequently received accolades from his colleagues after the university hired him as an assistant professor in 1993 and promoted him to associate professor in 1998. However, after his conversion to Christianity in 2000, Adams claims he was subjected to intrusive investigations, baseless accusations, and the denial of promotion to full professor, even though his scholarly output surpassed that of almost all of his colleagues.

ADF attorneys representing Adams sued UNCW in April 2007. A federal court denied the university's motion to dismiss the lawsuit in 2008, but then ruled against Adams last March. ADF attorneys appealed the district court decision and filed an opening brief in June 2010. The following month, The American Association of University Professors, the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, and the Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression filed a joint friend-of-the-court brief supporting Adams' appeal.

Have you ever felt discriminated against in the workplace because you love Jesus, and people know it?