

Professor Brent Terry
Webb Hall Room 225
Main Campus
Eastern Connecticut State University
83 Windham Street
Willimantic, CT 06226

Dear Professor Terry,

We often receive complaints by students and faculty who tell us they are fearful of expressing a conservative point of view or party affiliation, because of pressure and outright ridicule by peers and superiors at their schools. Your derogatory political statements against Republicans in front of your class are a stark example of an oppressive intellectual climate that many of these complainants feel they endure. This negative climate was further encouraged by an Eastern Connecticut State University spokesman who said, "Our faculty has academic freedom to conduct their classes in whatever way they choose, this is not a university matter." We would maintain that it *is* a university matter and goes beyond the disappointment and concern expressed by Eastern Connecticut State University President Nunez.

We have listened to a recording of your unfortunate remarks before a creative writing class at Eastern Connecticut State University. In this recording you unleash the following rant, that Republicans are "...racist, misogynist [woman-hating], money-grubbing people [who] have so much power over the rest of us." You further comment that, "there are a lot of people out there that do not want black people to vote, do not want Latinos to vote. Do not want old people to vote, or young people to vote."

In case your students remained unsure of whom these racist misogynists are, you conclude your remarks by predicting, "It's absolutely possible that the Republicans will take over the Senate as well as the House. And we will live in a very, very, very different kind of country if that happens. I mean, colleges will start closing up if they, if these people have their way."

This rant is offensive and an embarrassment in every respect. We are affronted by its prejudicial tone, and its one-sided and slanderous appraisal of Republicans as intolerant, anti-education bogeymen. We have spent decades in public service as K-12 educators, one of us has even served as a local Board of Education member and as a member of Connecticut's State Board of Education and we are Ranking Members of the Education and Higher Education Committees in both the state House and Senate, which work on Education policy and have oversight of Connecticut higher education institutions.

For one of us, the dedication to educational excellence for people from all walks of life comes from personal experience. Like millions of other immigrants Senator Boucher's family came to this country with nothing and little or no education, not speaking a word of English.

They were in search of an education for their children and an opportunity to succeed and attain the American dream. Your statement is an insult all Republicans who have fought hard for educational equity and access for all people.

Sadly, you believe that valuing education is a virtue specific to liberals. As you note in your statement, “They [Republicans] don’t think money should go to giving you people dangerous ideas about how the world should be run.” Academic freedom gives you the right to express your views as you see fit, but it does not validate ignorance, and it does not justify the presumption that your students hold the same opinions as you do. That anyone with authority over students would express these opinions is deeply disturbing. These notions were aired in a classroom at a state university, valued by both Republican and Democratic legislators and financed by taxpayers are offensive, especially to those of us who have spent years promoting positive education policy.

Speaking as a Republicans, we believe that your opinions are clearly within free speech liberties; that is not in question. But your prejudicial and inflammatory comments represent an egregious disregard for the forum of the captive audience to which they were so rudely directed, and for the values of open debate for which you purport to respect.

We hope that the views expressed in this audio clip are yours alone, and do not reflect the opinions of either the faculty at ECSU, or in the broader state university system. Still, no amount of distancing tactics can disconnect the university and its administration from responsibility in this matter. Such shameful behavior by a member of the ECSU faculty casts a cloud over everyone associated with the university and merits constructive correction.

If you truly regret your remarks, you will apologize to your students in person and to the university that you represent, and invite those of different perspectives to partake in the lively and respectful debate that you mention you had not provided. We look forward to serious efforts on your part, and on the part of the university to rectify this failure.

Sincerely,

Toni Boucher
State Senator – 26th Senate District
Ranking Member
Higher Education Committee

Tim LeGeys
State Representative – 17th Assembly District
Ranking Member
Higher Education Committee

CC:

President, Dr. Elsa Nunez
ECSU

President Gregory Gray

CT Board of Regents

Chairman Nicholas Donofrio

CT Board of Regents

Speaker Brendan Sharkey

CT House of Representatives

Senate President Donald Williams

Governor Dannel Malloy

