

From: Carlos Johnson [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, November 11, 2021 4:58 PM
To: Ruth Smith [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Dr. Steven Earnest - Confidential Communication for Settlement Purposes Only

Ruth,

I never said the University is returning Dr. Earnest to his teaching duties in the Spring. What I said is that your media messaging that the University has initiated termination proceedings is not accurate because, at this time, Dr. Earnest has only been reassigned to non-teaching duties which he is actually performing and being paid his full salary. A reassignment of that nature is not a punitive employment action. My comments about the possibility of Dr. Earnest returning to the classroom were only that, based on their prior reaction, the student response would probably be negative toward Dr. Earnest and that both parties should consider that potential disruption as we decide how we might finally resolve this matter.

During our call yesterday, I told you the University is focused on two potential courses of action, both leading to Dr. Earnest voluntarily moving on from CCU. 1) The University may be willing to grant Dr. Earnest a sabbatical for a reasonable period of time with the agreement that he will retire or resign at the end of the sabbatical period, or 2) The University may be willing to initiate the process to properly contribute additional years to his State Service Time in order to aid his retirement from the University at the conclusion of the 2021 – 2022 academic year, or a relatively short period of time thereafter. I advised you that additional information concerning Dr. Earnest's prior work for the States of Georgia and California would need to be confirmed before a definite course of action could be determined.

During our call, we both agreed and repeatedly confirmed that neither of us was authorized to make a formal offer of resolution during that call, so I'm not sure how you interpreted our discussion as the University will return Dr. Earnest to his teaching duties in the Spring. When our call concluded, I expected you would discuss the two potential courses of action I noted above with Dr. Earnest and he would let us know which course of action he is most interested in. Once I get a clear understanding of Dr. Earnest's position in regard to the University supporting him in voluntarily moving on from CCU in one of the ways noted above, I will be able to let you know definitely which route the University will take.

Carlos C. Johnson
Senior VP and University Counsel
Coastal Carolina University

From: Ruth Smith [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, November 11, 2021 4:00 PM
To: Carlos Johnson [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Dr. Steven Earnest

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Carlos,

Can you please just answer the question:

Is CCU terminating Professor Earnest's or not?

Yes, I'm confused. We have gone from "he's definitely gone. The terms of how he leaves is up to him" to now CCU's removal of him from teaching responsibilities is not "punitive" and CCU will allow him to return to teaching in the spring.

I need you to take a position one way or the other.

If you are terminating him, I need to know specifically what offense CCU alleges he committed and whom the accusers are.

I don't believe that these questions are unreasonable and after 2 months, I would hope CCU would be able to answer them.

-Ruth