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June 11, 2009

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[Greg Lukianoff](#)

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FIRE Protests UC Santa Barbara's Investigation of Professor Robinson

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Back in May, I [reported](#) on the case of William I. Robinson, a professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara who is being investigated for writing his students an e-mail comparing the Nazi treatment of Jews with Israel's actions towards Palestinians. At that point the investigation seemed somewhat tentative and I had hoped that cooler heads would prevail. But, while my work does produce the occasional pleasant surprise, this was not to be. Therefore my organization, the [Foundation for Individual Rights in Education \(FIRE\)](#), [sent a letter to UCSB](#) today asking it to abandon its investigation of Robinson.

In the letter, my colleague Adam Kissel forcefully demonstrates why such an investigation is not only wrongheaded but fundamentally at odds with the principles of academic freedom. In my previous blog post, I pointed out why Robinson's case is somewhat stickier than most from an academic freedom perspective, but I ultimately concluded that, nonetheless, his speech is and should be protected.

Those who disagree with Robinson or think his e-mail does not represent the best traditions of American pedagogy are free to those opinions. They are, furthermore, free to protest the University, Robinson, or his department, and to question UCSB's academic and hiring judgments. But once investigations are launched against professors for writing provocative e-mails to their students on issues related to the topics of their classes, we are faced again with a fundamental truth about education: being offended is what happens when you have your deepest beliefs challenged, and if you make it through four years of college without having your deepest beliefs challenged, you should ask for your money back.

UCSB should drop its investigation of Professor Robinson.

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