



March 30, 2021

Duane A. Compton, PhD
Dean of the Medical School
Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth
1 Rope Ferry Road
Hanover, New Hampshire 03755

Sent Via Electronic Mail (duane.a.compton@dartmouth.edu)

Dear Dean Compton:

FIRE¹ and EFF² are concerned about a potential threat to student rights at Dartmouth's Geisel School of Medicine, where several students face discipline for allegedly having accessed relevant material on the school's e-curriculum platform while actively taking exams.

EFF's technologists have reviewed the technical materials provided by the university and take issue with its analysis. EFF's research indicates that any device through which a student is logged into the e-curriculum platform will continue to make connections to that platform using automatic syncing (also known as AJAX), even if that device is locked and not in use.

Dartmouth apparently interprets any connection logs as evidence that the student was actively utilizing the e-curriculum platform, rather than merely having another device passively logged into the platform, such as a cell phone or separate computer.

Dartmouth has likely turned false positives into accusations of academic misconduct, taking enforcement action against innocent students based on faulty technical evidence, rather than relying on dispositive evidence that the students were making active use of any external materials.

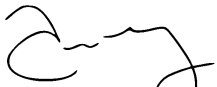
¹ The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to defending liberty, freedom of speech, due process, academic freedom, legal equality, and freedom of conscience on America's college campuses.

² The Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) works to ensure that technology supports freedom, justice, and innovation for all the people of the world. Founded in 1990, EFF is a non-profit organization supported by more than 30,000 members.

Our organizations strongly suggest the college more thoroughly review the details of each case, with the support of outside technologists, before making any disciplinary decisions. Students facing misconduct charges must also be provided due process, consistent with Dartmouth College policy, during these disciplinary proceedings. To the extent that Dartmouth has already imposed discipline on any student—including through any student's waiver of their rights to contest the allegations against them—we call on Dartmouth to rescind those sanctions pending a thorough review of the evidentiary basis of the allegations.

Given the urgent nature of this matter, we request receipt of a response to this letter no later than the close of business on Friday, April 2, 2021.

Sincerely,



Alexandria Morey
Program Officer, Legal and Public Advocacy
Foundation for Individual Rights in Education



Cooper Quintin
Senior Staff Technologist
Electronic Frontier Foundation

Cc: Office of the General Counsel, Dartmouth College
Geisel School of Medicine
Office of the Registrar, Geisel School of Medicine