

LDB & SPME Urge Connecticut College Re: Andrew Pessin

May 11, 2015, *Washington, D.C.*: This morning, the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law (LDB) (www.brandeiscenter.com) and Scholars for Peace in the Middle East (SPME) (www.spme.org) have joined together to express concern over hate and bias at Connecticut College, specifically regarding the recent vicious retaliation suffered by Philosophy Professor Andrew Pessin. Professor Pessin is one of the few outspoken pro-Israel voices at the College, and has faced severe retaliation for posting unpopular, and misunderstood, postings on Facebook last August. The retaliation he has faced has seriously stifled academic freedom expression on campus. (<http://brandeiscenter.com/practices/>)



Philosophy Professor Andrew Pessin



LDB (www.brandeiscenter.com), a national public interest advocacy organization established to advance the civil and human rights of the Jewish people and promote justice for all, and SPME (www.spme.org), a grass-roots community of scholars who have united to promote honest, fact-based, and civil discourse, especially in regard to Middle East issues, expressed concern about the treatment of Pessin, by fellow Connecticut College faculty members. Additionally, the two organizations are concerned about the campus climate for Jewish and Israeli students in light of this incident.

The letter urges Connecticut College to reestablish an objective academic program to prevent hate and bias from instilling on campus against Jewish and Israeli students.

The letter can be viewed below.



May 11, 2015

Katherine Bergeron
President
president@conncoll.edu

Abby Van Slyck
Dean of the Faculty
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Ulysses Hammond
Vice President for Administration
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VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Re: Concern About Hate & Bias at Connecticut College

Dear President Bergeron, Dean Van Slyck, and Vice President Hammond:

We write on behalf of the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law (LDB), a national public interest advocacy organization established to advance the civil and human rights of the Jewish people and promote justice for all, and Scholars for Peace in the Middle East (SPME), a grass-roots community of scholars who have united to promote honest, fact-based, and civil discourse, especially in regard to Middle East issues.

Our organizations are concerned that one of the few outspoken pro-Israel voices on your campus, Professor Andrew Pessin, has faced vicious retaliation for expressing politically unpopular

viewpoints, which could seriously stifle academic expression on campus. We are especially concerned with the fact that much of the retaliation against Dr. Pessin has

been conducted by his fellow Connecticut College faculty members. Further, we are concerned about the campus climate for Jewish and Israeli students in light of this incident.

While we understand that the College has taken efforts to correct the wrongs against Dr. Pessin, some of these efforts have been misguided. We are aware that you have appointed three interim Deans of Equity and Inclusion, who have tried to establish “even handed” programs on Palestine and Israel. However, the programs presented thus far have been one-sided, featuring radical anti-Israel activists (none of whom had standard academic credentials to address the conflict), a JStreet “anti-occupation” activist, and a far-left Zionist academic. These programs are by no means “even-handed,” and are possibly perpetuating the anti-Israelism on campus.

While we appreciate the assurances you have taken thus far to protect Professor Pessin’s job, we urge you to do the following:

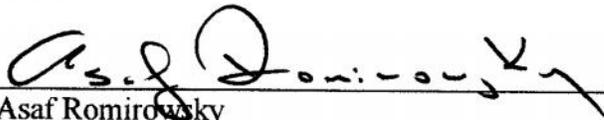
- 1) The College should provide assurances to prevent recurring retaliation.
- 2) The College should ensure that the new Deans of Equity actually offer diverse programming, rather than one-sided programming that might perpetuate the hostile attitudes towards Jewish and Israeli students.
- 3) The College should publicly apologize to Professor Pessin, and announce measures it would take to not stifle the speech of members of their faculty in the future.
- 4) The College must address and respond to all forms of hate and bias, *promptly and effectively*, and must do so in a manor to protect freedom of speech and academic freedom. We are attaching LDB’s “Best Practice Guide for Combating Anti-Semitism and Anti-Israelism,” which contains information on how to prevent and address such issues in the future.
- 5) To help ensure an adverse climate for Jewish and Israeli students is not created on campus, we urge you to issue a strong statement against hate and bias, specifically condemning anti-Semitism, and outlining what it means to be anti-Semitic. (*See attached U.S. Department of State’s Definition of Anti-Semitism.*)

We are also available to speak to you and university staff about how Connecticut College can establish best practices for addressing such incidents. We can be reached by phone at (202) 559-9296. We thank you in advance for your serious consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



Kenneth L. Marcus
President & General Counsel
The Louis D. Brandeis Center
for Human Rights Under Law



Asaf Romirovsky
Executive Director
Scholars for Peace in the Middle East

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About The Louis D. Brandeis Center:

The Louis D. Brandeis Center, Inc., or LDB, is an independent, nonprofit organization established to advance the civil and human rights of the Jewish people and promote justice for all. The Brandeis Center conducts research, education, and advocacy to combat the resurgence of anti-Semitism on college and university campuses. It is not affiliated with the Massachusetts University, the Kentucky law school, or any of the other institutions that share the name and honor the memory of the late U.S. Supreme Court justice. For more information, contact Kenneth L. Marcus at klmarcus@brandeiscenter.com, or find us at www.brandeiscenter.com

About Scholars for Peace in the Middle East:

Scholars for Peace in the Middle East (SPME) is not-for-profit [501 (C) (3)], grass-roots community of scholars who have united to promote honest, fact-based, and civil discourse, especially in regard to Middle East issues. We believe that ethnic, national, and religious hatreds, including anti-Semitism and anti-Israelism, have no place in our institutions, disciplines, and communities. We employ academic means to address these issues. For more information, contact Asaf Romirowsky at aromirowsky@spme.org, or find us at www.spme.org.