



# Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship

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21 June 2017

President Anthony Munroe  
Essex County College  
A. Zachary Yamba Building  
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Newark, NJ 07102  
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Dear President Munroe:

Re: Professor Lisa Durden

I am writing as president of the Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship (SAFS), an organization of university faculty members and others dedicated to the defense of academic freedom and reasoned and respectful debate. (For further information, please see our website at [www.safs.ca](http://www.safs.ca).)

We would like to ask about your administration's decision to suspend Lisa Durden following her recent appearance on *Tucker Carlson Tonight*, as reported in this article from *Inside Higher Ed*:

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/06/21/college-allegedly-suspends-communications-adjunct-comments-about-race-fox-news>

If this report is accurate it would seem that Prof. Durden's academic freedom has been violated.

Our understanding is that: a) Prof. Durden appeared on *Tucker Carlson Tonight* and argued in support of a Black Lives Matter celebration on Memorial Day; b) an individual complained about the content of her remarks; c) as a result of the complaint, Prof. Durden was suspended; d) Prof. Durden was accused of having identified herself on *Tucker Carlson Tonight* as an Essex County College professor; e) the clip of her discussion on *Tucker Carlson Tonight* includes no reference to Essex County College by Prof. Durden, Tucker Carlson, or anyone else (and Prof. Durden explicitly states: "I'm speaking for Lisa Durden"); f) therefore, Prof. Durden was not in violation of the AAUP policy which cautions that "...

scholars and educational officers ... should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution.”

Is our understanding correct? If it is, her suspension would be an egregious violation of academic freedom.

Because an essential role of a college is to provide an atmosphere in which the free expression of ideas is possible, professors should not be disciplined for saying what they think. Accordingly, Essex County College has a responsibility to explain its decision, not only to the individual professor involved but also to the wider community.

We respectfully ask you to respond to our letter and explain the rationale behind your decision to suspend Prof. Durden. With your permission, we will post your response along with this letter on our website.

Sincerely,

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