

Controversial psychology professor to retire in the fall

Kevin MacDonald began his career at Cal State Long Beach in 1985.

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After teaching for 30 years at Cal State Long Beach, controversial “anti-Semitic” psychology professor Kevin MacDonald will begin his final semester in the fall.

MacDonald will retire through the Cal State University Faculty Early Retirement Program, which allows tenured CSU faculty to retire and continue to work part-time for an additional five years, collecting both a pension and a salary, according to Rene Castro, director of academic employee relations.

The transition into his final semester, however, is causing friction between MacDonald and the CSU.

MacDonald, who signed the FERP contract five years ago, said the initial agreement between himself, the psychology department and the College of Liberal Arts was to teach one full load of classes during his last semester with the university.

“Just now, I got an offer to instead of [teaching] the usual four courses it would be one course,” MacDonald said. “I don’t think it would affect my pay, but I’m not happy with it.”

Before MacDonald received the new offer to teach one class in the fall, David Whitney, chair of psychology department, called MacDonald on March 25 to inform him that he would be reassigned from teaching to perform administrative work, MacDonald said. Whitney declined to comment about the situation.

Terri Carbaugh, CSULB’s vice president of legislative and external relations, said that MacDonald’s course load was cut down in order to uphold his responsibilities to the university. He will have a heavy workload to “tie up loose ends” for the university, she said.

“It’s the responsibility of the administrator to balance the workload,” Carbaugh said. “[MacDonald] has been assigned other duties, and he will be plenty busy.” There is no violation in the FERP contract with MacDonald, she said.

Under article 29.18 of the FERP contract, “a participant shall be required to perform normal responsibilities and his/her share of normal duties and activities,” according to the

CSU website. The responsibilities can include administrative work in lieu of the regular class schedule.

MacDonald said he has not yet looked into filing a lawsuit citing academic freedom. He said that a lawsuit is not his preference, so he would not discuss it further.

MacDonald responded to the change with a letter addressed to CSU Chancellor Timothy P. White, saying, "Removing me from teaching under these circumstances raises grave issues of academic freedom, particularly given the controversial nature of my research and writing and a long history of harassment at CSULB because of my research and writing."

MacDonald's start at CSULB

Tension between MacDonald and the CSU goes back to the early 2000s.

MacDonald started his career at CSULB in 1985 and received a promotion into full professorship in 1995. That same year, MacDonald received the CSULB Distinguished Faculty Scholarly and Creative Activities Award.

Fellow psychology professor Martin Fiebert said during MacDonald's first years of teaching, his course material included the connection between intelligence and ethnic differences.

"In the old days, it was a small part of a class, and he was basing it on facts," Fiebert said.

Fiebert, who has worked with MacDonald since his hire, said MacDonald held a reputation as a prominent scholar and researcher in developmental psychology prior to the university discovering his anti-Semitic material.

He said MacDonald was overall liked within the department, building relationships with fellow professors that helped motivate his promotion.

After a few years, in the mid-'90s, MacDonald offered to share his raw research material on the analysis of anti-Semitism with Fiebert.

Fiebert said he challenged MacDonald on his analysis of a DNA connection among all Jews. He warned MacDonald that anti-Semitic groups could strengthen their ideologies through his material.

"One of the main problems I saw was the framework he took would be considered by many to be a justification for anti-Semitic behavior," Fiebert said. "I was fearful that his work would stand alongside 'Mein Kampf' and 'The Protocols of the Elders of Zion.'" The former work is Adolf Hitler's autobiographical manifesto while the latter is a

fabricated document perpetuating the idea that Jewish leaders are conspiring for world domination.

Despite being unhappy with Fiebert's feedback, MacDonald said, they remained friends until MacDonald testified in David Irving's trial in January 2000.

Irving, a famous British war historian who is known for suggesting the holocaust didn't happen, according to BBC News, sued an author for libel.

Though MacDonald is not a "holocaust denier," during the trial media frenzy surrounding MacDonald trickled into CSULB and his anti-Semitic background was revealed, Fiebert said.

Concerned about MacDonald's involvement in Irving's trial, Fiebert shared MacDonald's anti-Semitic research with the psychology department, which led to a number of departments proposing a public campus forum.

MacDonald agreed to answer questions from concerned faculty members through email discussions in May 2000. This was done to avoid a negative media spectacle, according to an article in CSULB Academe Today.

Several professors in the psychology department declined to comment for this story.

In the article, the university made its first public statement that year on behalf of MacDonald saying faculty members uphold their right "to express themselves freely under the First Amendment," and "do not necessarily represent the opinion or beliefs of the university or the faculty."

MacDonald didn't face criticism from the media until he began frequently producing scholarly papers and writing radical anti-Semitic research for publications, such as "The Occidental Quarterly," "Vdare" and the "Radix Journal."

MacDonald's most popular published works address the dying population of European-Americans in Western society in relation to evolutionary theories of Jews, which circulated throughout news media.

"There was something around 2007 when Heidi Beirich [a Southern Poverty Law Center journalist] came here and started something up and pressured to fire me," MacDonald said. "Resolutions from all these departments, [but] no one has ever charged me. I teach developmental psychology, but I never talk about my [anti-Semitic] issues [in class]."

That year, Beirich interviewed MacDonald's coworkers for, The SPLC an online publication dedicated to "fighting hate, teaching tolerance and seeking justice," according to its website. MacDonald was added to SPLC's national "hate watch" list.

Between 2006 and 2008, MacDonald said hostility toward him brought unwanted stress, but he chose to stay at CSULB.

“If I were to seek a job, the hiring committee would see my past,” MacDonald said. “I don’t think I had a lot of choices besides being in a hostile work environment.”

Despite support from anti-Semitic and white supremacist groups, MacDonald said he categorizes his work as evolutionary perspectives on culture, developmental psychology and personality theory in relation to the Jewish population.

CSULB faculty discussed MacDonald’s questionable anti-Semitic material in an open forum in 2008. At the forum, the Alpert Jewish Community Center requested to dissociate the university from his material outside of CSULB.

Following the forum, former CSULB President F. King Alexander said in an email from April 2008, “Universities should be firmly committed, even at times when it is against popular opinion, to freedom of thought.”

A few months later, in June 2008, Alexander made a statement, saying, “[MacDonald’s] views and opinions in no way represent the views of this university in any aspect whatsoever.”

Several students who have taken a course with MacDonald said they didn’t encounter any racism in his curriculum, according to **ratemyprofessor.com**.

In 2009, following the controversy, MacDonald signed the FERP contract.

“The negative atmosphere weighed on me,” MacDonald said.

MacDonald controversy calms

Although the negative press has died down since 2010, MacDonald is facing new challenges from the university during the last leg of his retirement.

In fall 2013, MacDonald was accused of discrimination in his classroom through an anonymous student complaint.

“They gave me a written complaint version,” MacDonald said. “It was all verbal; basically the student went to my academic website and was horrified by what she saw and dropped the course.”

Around the same time, the original agreement MacDonald made with the psychology department and the CLA went under re-evaluation, he said.

“I don’t know what’s going on,” MacDonald said. “I’ve talked to my attorney on what to do about this situation where they don’t want me to teach.”

Dean of the CLA David Wallace could not be reached for comment, and he directed the questions to Carbaugh.

“It was a managerial decision, and that’s the extent of it,” Carbaugh said. “Sometimes when managers assign workload, the [faculty] is pleased and sometimes they’re not.”

In light of Carbaugh’s comments, MacDonald said, “Keep in mind the sequence of what they offered.”

The first offer was MacDonald’s regular schedule, followed by an offer to take the last semester for administrative work only. The most recent is a combination of one class and administrative work.

“They [say] it’s about ‘loose ends’ and ‘a common practice,’” MacDonald said. “Why wouldn’t they tell me that? I have not accepted the one-course offer. I told Whitney I would get back to him about it.”

To MacDonald’s knowledge, there is no deadline to accept the offer, and he said he is considering a number of options.

MacDonald said he will leave CSULB with mixed feelings: relieved to enjoy his golden age outside of what he considers a hostile environment and able to dedicate more time toward his research.

- See more at: <http://www.daily49er.com/news/2014/04/14/controversial-psychology-professor-to-retire-in-the-fall/#sthash.I8usyv1q.dpuf>