Intelligent Design Was the Issue After All (Updated)

ISU's official explanation in the Gonzalez case exposed as a sham.

Documents show Gonzalez was denied fair tenure process by hostile colleagues who plotted behind his back, suppressed evidence, and then misled the public.

Executive Summary

Internal e-mails and other documents obtained under the Iowa Open Records Act completely contradict public claims by Iowa State University (ISU) that the denial of tenure to astronomer Guillermo Gonzalez was unrelated to his support for the theory of intelligent design. According to these documents:

- Dr. Gonzalez was subjected to a secret campaign of vilification and ridicule by colleagues in the Department of Physics and Astronomy who explicitly wanted to get rid of him because of his pro-intelligent design views, not his scholarship.
- Dr. Gonzalez's work and views on intelligent design were repeatedly attacked during department tenure deliberations.
- Dr. Gonzalez's colleagues secretly plotted to evade the law by suppressing evidence that could be used against them in court to supply proof of a hostile work environment.
- One of Dr. Gonzalez's colleagues admitted to another faculty member that the Department of Physics and Astronomy had violated the principle of academic freedom "massively" when it came to Gonzalez, while other colleagues expressed qualms that their secret plotting against Gonzalez was unethical or dishonest.
- Dr. Gonzalez's department chair misled the public after the fact by insisting that "intelligent design was not a major or even a big factor in this decision"—even though he had privately told colleagues that Gonzalez's support for intelligent design alone "disqualifies him from serving as a science educator."
- In voting to reject tenure for Dr. Gonzalez, members of the Department of Physics and Astronomy all but ignored recommendations made by the majority of their own outside scientific reviewers, who thought Gonzalez clearly deserved tenure.

The bottom line according to these documents is that Dr. Gonzalez's rights to academic freedom, free speech, and a fair tenure process were trampled on by colleagues who were driven more by ideological zeal than by an impartial evaluation of Gonzalez's accomplishments as a scientist.

A. The Secret Campaign to Vilify Dr. Gonzalez and Get Him to Leave ISU because of his Pro-ID Views

- In private e-mails, Dr. Gonzalez's colleagues repeatedly expressed their intolerance towards Gonzalez's ID views by asserting that ID is "intellectually vacuous," more than just vacuous," that "[e]mbalming is more of a science" than ID, and that Gonzalez should be lumped with "idiots" and "religious nutcases." They hoped that ID would experience "self destruction" and mocked Gonzalez's ID work, saying they would study it "[u]nder medication."
- Gonzalez's colleagues drafted—and nearly released—a petition against ID whose avowed purpose was "to discredit" Gonzalez, and "give Gonzalez a clear sign that his ID efforts will not be considered as science by the faculty."
- Department member Vladimir Kogan urged his colleagues to denounce ID publicly with the express purpose of pressuring Gonzalez to leave ISU without applying for tenure: "our open statement signed and put in a visible place will show to GG that this is not a friendly place for him to develop further his IDeas. He may look for a better place as a result."
- ISU Professor Bruce Harmon also expressed the hope that Gonzalez would leave "and solve us the potentially difficult issue." Harmon explicitly admitted that Gonzalez's views on intelligent design posed a significant obstacle to his getting tenure: "[Intelligent Design] is a topic that is **simmering in my blood** ... [Gonzalez] will be up for tenure next year, and if he keeps up, it might be a hard sell to the department (but may be not so difficult for his lawyers, who will certainly be retained by the Discovery Institute). ... [H]e is claiming ID is a proper branch of science, and so I think he opens it up in his tenure consideration. I would have thought an intelligent person would have at least kept quiet until after tenure. Then you can **advocate blowing up the moon.**"11

B. The Use of Intelligent Design as a Negative Factor in Tenure Deliberations

 $^{^{\}rm 1}$ E-mail from Curt Struck to Lee Anne Willson and Steve Kawaler.

² 2/17/2004 e-mail from Lee Anne Willson replying to Curt Struck's.

³ 11/22/2005 e-mail from Vladimir Kogan to Bruce Harmon, Sergei Budko, Joerg Schmalian, John Clem, Doug Finnemore, and Paul Canfield.

⁴ 6/5/2007 e-mail from John Hauptman to Hector Avalos.

⁵ 12/04/2005 e-mail from Bruce Harmon to Paul Canfield and Eli Rosenberg.

⁶ 7/20/2005 e-mail from Bruce Harmon to Eli Rosenberg and Paul Canfield.

⁷ 11/27/2005 e-mail from John Clem to Paul Canfield, then forwarded by Canfield on to Sergei Budko, Doug Finnemore, Joerg Schmalian, Vladimir Kogan, and Paul C. Canfield.

^{8 11/22/2005} e-mail from Joerg Schmalian to Bruce Harmon, Sergei Budko, John Clem, Vladimir Kogan, Doug Finnemore, and Paul Canfield

⁹ 11/22/2005 e-mail from Vladimir Kogan to Bruce Harmon, Sergei Budko, Joerg Schmalian, John Clem, Doug Finnemore, and Paul Canfield.

¹⁰ 9/23/2005 e-mail from Bruce Harmon to Hugo Fritz Franzen.

¹¹ 9/23/2005 e-mail from Bruce Harmon to Hugo Fritz Franzen (emphasis added).

- Long before Dr. Gonzalez came up for tenure, his colleagues' intolerance had crossed legal and ethical boundaries. They clearly were prejudiced against ID and felt that the only way to save the department's reputation was to get rid of Gonzalez, or better yet, hope that Gonzalez would feel unwelcome and simply choose to leave ISU. This intolerance became even more manifest during tenure evaluations.
- In his department's report on his tenure evaluation, it was stated that Dr. Gonzalez's work on ID entailed "naïve reasoning" and that "[p]erhaps the most problematic of Dr. Gonzalez's scholarly efforts has been his co-authorship of the book 'The Privileged Planet: How Our Place in the Cosmos is Designed for Discovery.'" The faculty members pejoratively labeled intelligent design an "ansatz," a term from mathematics which means something "not based on any underlying theory or principle."
- Faculty members admitted that they were concerned that Dr. Gonzalez's affiliation with the ID movement might help intelligent design and be "harmful to science in general": "[s]ome noted ... that his association with the intelligent design movement is harmful to his career, and by allowing the movement to include an otherwise respected scientist, it is harmful to science in general." 15

C. The Secret Effort to Evade the Law by Suppressing Evidence that Could Be Used in Court to Prove a Hostile Work Environment

- Dr. Gonzalez's colleagues ultimately abandoned plans for a public anti-ID statement as part of an effort to evade the law by suppressing evidence that could be used in court to expose the hostile work environment they had created for Dr. Gonzalez.
- ISU astronomer Steve Kawaler, whose wife is a "former employment lawyer" and gave him legal advice on this matter,¹⁶ passed the advice on to his colleagues, explaining why the department must abandon the statement:
 - "I think it is a big mistake for anyone in our department to go on the record on this issue given the upcoming (next year) up or out decision regarding our most vocal for the use of ID to guide scientific inquiry. ... Yes it will get worse before it gets better. But circulating such a statement could accelerate the process and could easily play into the hands of your perceived adversaries. For example, it could be used to justify a legal claim of a hostile work environment. That could be ammunition in any appeal of a tenure decision."17
- After Kawaler warned of legal troubles, John Clem withdrew his support from the statement because he also wanted to hide from Gonzalez any evidence that would allow him to prove that he had been subjected to a hostile work environment:

¹² Guillermo Gonzalez Tenure Dossier, Page 23 of 33.

¹³ Guillermo Gonzalez Tenure Dossier, Page 24 of 33.

¹⁴ Online definition at Stephen Wolfram's "Mathworld" at http://mathworld.wolfram.com/Ansatz.html

¹⁵ Guillermo Gonzalez Tenure Dossier, Page 24 of 33.

¹⁶ 11/22/2005 e-mail from Steve Kawaler to Bruce Harmon.

¹⁷ 11/21/2005, e-mail from Steve Kawaler to Bruce Harmon (emphasis added)..

- "I had a conversation yesterday evening with my son Paul, who has had management training at Sandia. I told him about the current situation and the concerns about 'hostile work environments.' His opinion was that indeed lawyers might well be successful in convincing a jury of average Americans that publication of our statement was reasonable for creating a hostile work environment. ... As strong as my feelings are on this matter, I have come around to Steve Kawaler's point of view. I now feel that publication of such a statement might become the most important piece of evidence in a successful court case to guarantee tenure to the person whose scientific credibility we would be attempting to discredit ... As for the unfortunate publicity we are receiving and the embarrassment we feel as a department, I think the best policy is to just grin and bear it for the next couple of years."18
- After John Clem chose to back out of the statement, Joerg Schmalian wrote various ISU physicists and astronomers saying "I think we should nevertheless proceed." Schmalian understood that their conversations about abandoning the statement would be taken as precisely what they were: attempts to cover up the intolerance towards ID in the department: "They feared that "[i]n view of an upcoming tenure decision, secrecy in the department may equally be interpreted as prejudging the case." 19 "If it becomes clear that there were efforts to write such a statement and that the statement was not made only to avoid the impression of a hostile environment, isn't this strong evidence for a secrecy in the department [?]" 20

D. Private admissions that Dr. Gonzalez was denied academic freedom or otherwise mistreated.

- In a particularly damning e-mail, ISU Physicist John Hauptmann admitted to faculty member Hector Avalos that "principle [of freedom of inquiry] has been violated massively in the physics department"²¹ in its treatment of Dr. Gonzalez.
- Other faculty members privately expressed qualms at the unethical and dishonest way they were plotting against Dr. Gonzalez behind his back. Dr. Harmon stated to Kawaler that, "I don't think talking behind Guillermo's back is quite ethical." Bruce Harmon had similar concerns, stating that they should issue the statement because otherwise it would appear that they were doing exactly what they were doing: secretly scheming about how to attack the viewpoint of a department member who was under consideration for tenure. Harmon wrote:
 - "Do we do everything at secret meetings and the hope the Discovery Institute's Lawyers don't subpoena our records? If I were Gonzalez, I would prefer my colleagues were honest and forthright in their opinions, as he seems to be with his."23

¹⁸ 11/27/2005 e-mail from John Clem to Paul Canfield, then forwarded by Canfield on to Sergei Budko, Doug Finnemore, Joerg Schmalian, Vladimir Kogan, and Paul C. Canfield (emphasis added).

¹⁹ 11/22/2005 e-mail from Joerg Schmalian to Bruce Harmon, Sergei Budko, John Clem, Vladimir Kogan, Doug Finnemore, and Paul Canfield (emphasis added).

²⁰ 11/27/2005 e-mail from Joerg Schmalian to Bruce Harmon, Sergei Budko, Doug Finnemore, Vladimir Kogan, Paul Canfield, and John Clem (emphasis added).

²¹ John Hauptman, "Rights are Intact: Decision Rests on 'What is Science?'," *Des Moines Register* (June 2, 2007) (emphasis added).

²² 11/22/2005 E-mail from Bruce Harmon to Steve Kawaler.

²³ 11/22/2005 E-mail from Bruce Harmon to Sergei Budko, Joerg Schmalian, Vladimir Kogan, Doug Finnemore, and Paul Canfield. In the original version of this document, this e-mail was mistakenly attributed to Paul Canfield rather than Bruce Harmon.

 Kogan also knew they were acting inappropriately, writing, "It is not nice to discuss all this behind his back."²⁴

E. The Cover-Up: Department Chair Eli Rosenberg's Effort to Mislead the Public

- After Dr. Gonzalez's denial of tenure, Dr. Eli Rosenberg, chair of the Department of Physics and Astronomy, publicly insisted that "intelligent design was not a major or even a big factor in this decision."²⁵ The record clearly shows otherwise, especially when it comes to Dr. Rosenberg himself.
- Contrary to his later public statements, during the tenure process Dr. Rosenberg presented Dr. Gonzalez's beliefs about intelligent design as a clear-cut litmus test on whether he was qualified to be a science educator, stating:
 - o "on numerous occasions, Dr. Gonzalez has stated that Intelligent Design is a scientific theory and someday would be taught in science classrooms. This is confirmed by his numerous postings on the Discovery Institute Web site. The problem here is that Intelligent Design is not a scientific theory. Its premise is beyond the realm of science. ... But it is incumbent on a science educator to clearly understand and be able to articulate what science is and what it is not. The fact that Dr. Gonzalez does not understand what constitutes both science and a scientific theory disqualifies him from serving as a science educator."²⁶

F. The Rejection of the Recommendations of the Outside Reviewers

- Of the nine review letters by scientists outside ISU that gave recommendations regarding Dr. Gonzalez's final tenure decision, six strongly supported his tenure promotion and gave glowing endorsements of his reputation and academic achievements. (Even Dr. Gonzalez's tenure dossier admitted that "five of the external letter writers ... including senior scientists at prestigious institutions recommend his promotion" and that only "[t]hree do not." 27)
- One reviewer observed that ISU's Department of Physics and Astronomy does not consider grants as a criterion for gaining tenure, and stated that "Dr. Gonzalez is eminently qualified for the promotion according to your guidelines of excellence in scholarship and exhibiting a potential for national distinction. In light of your criteria I would certainly recommend the promotion."²⁸
- ISU chose to ignore the advice of these senior scientists at prestigious institutions.

²⁴ 11/22/2005 E-mail from Vladimir Kogan to John Clem, Bruce Harmon, Sergei Budko, Joerg Schmalian, Doug Finnemore, and Paul Canfield.

²⁵ Eli Rosenberg, quoted in Geoff Brumfiel, "Darwin sceptic says views cost tenure," Vol. 447:364 (May 24, 2007).

²⁶ Eli Rosenberg's Chair's Statement in Guillermo Gonzalez tenure dossier, page 29 of 33.

²⁷ Guillermo Gonzalez, Tenure Dossier Page 25 of 33.

²⁸ Letter of Reviewer, Dated Sept. 21, 2006, Guillermo Gonzalez Tenure Dossier at 000093-00094 (emphasis added).