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John W. Wight

Superintendent, El Tejon School District
P.O. Box 876
Lebec, CA 93243

Dear Mr. Wight:

I am an attorney with the Discovery Institute, the leading organization supporting scientific research into intelligent design. Recently I became aware of the “Philosophy of design” course offered at Frazier Mountain High School. The title and nature of this course are problematic and appear to misrepresent the content of the course and intelligent design.

After reading the “Philosophy of design” syllabus and other course materials, we’ve determined that the course inaccurately mixes intelligent design with young earth creationism or Biblical creationism. Moreover, it appears that more than half of the course content deals with young earth creationist materials. Indeed, from the materials I read, only 2 of the 24 videos deal specifically with intelligent design.

Intelligent design is different from creationism because intelligent design is based upon empirical data, rather than religious scripture, and also because intelligent design is not a theory about the age of the earth. Moreover, unlike creationism, intelligent design does not try to inject itself into religious discussions about the identity of the intelligence responsible for life. Creationism, in contrast, always postulates a supernatural or divine creator. Thus the U.S. Supreme Court found that creationism was religion in 1987 in the case *Edwards v. Aguillard*.

Under the current formulation, the course title “Philosophy of design” misrepresents intelligent design by promoting young earth creationism under the guise of intelligent design. We respectfully request that you either reformulate the course by removing the young earth creationist materials or retitle the course as a course not focused on intelligent design. Otherwise, this course could be damaging to scientists and other scholars investigating intelligent design as a genuinely scientific alternative to Darwinism because the course conflates intelligent design with Biblical creationist religious views about creation.

We support efforts to teach different scientific views on the subject of origins in an objective and pedagogically appropriate manner, which allows students to study the strengths and weaknesses of various views. But if this course is intended to present purely scientific views on intelligent design, the content needs to be reformulated and creationist material should be removed. Otherwise, change the title of the course so it does not misrepresent the theory of intelligent design. A final acceptable remedy is to simply cancel the course. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Casey Luskin, ESQ
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