

## Secret ISU Faculty E-mails Express Vitriol towards Intelligent Design, Disregard for Academic Freedom, and attempts to Hide a Plot to Oust an Outstanding Scientist

Public document requests under Iowa's Open Records Act obtained correspondence of key faculty members within ISU's Department of Physics and Astronomy. Various e-mails reveal that Dr. Gonzalez's department was far more concerned about the "embarrassment" that intelligent design (ID) caused the department's reputation rather than protecting his academic freedom—despite the fact that ISU's faculty handbook claims that "[a]cademic freedom is the foundation of the university." E-mails reveal intense bias against ID on the part of ISU physicists and astronomers that voted on his tenure, including ridicule of Gonzalez's position on ID. The faculty nearly released a statement condemning ID, hoping to send a message to Dr. Gonzalez that he is unwelcome at ISU, but stopped short only when they realized the legal ramifications. E-mails also reveal that some faculty prejudged Dr. Gonzalez's tenure case a year before his tenure vote simply because he supports ID. Above all, the e-mails show that intolerance towards intelligent design played a major, if not an overriding factor in Dr. Gonzalez's denial of tenure by his department at ISU.

**Joerg Schmalian, ISU Physicist.** Embarrassed about Gonzalez's views on ID but simultaneously worried about the secret tenure deliberation e-mails and undeniable evidence of a hostile work environment and prejudging his case:

- "This is not any longer an **embarrassment**, [sic] **it is actual damage**."<sup>1</sup> "In view of an upcoming tenure decision, secrecy in the department may equally be interpreted as **prejudging the case** as making a statement. If we go on record, we give Gonzalez a clear sign that his ID efforts will not be considered as science by the faculty."<sup>2</sup> "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...?"<sup>3</sup>

**Vladimir Kogan, ISU Physicist.** Bitterly opposes ID and wants Gonzalez to go someplace else as a result:

- "[O]ur silence is certainly read by the scientific community (unaware of departmental politics) as approval of ID supporters. We just express the position of signatories: ID is not science and does not belong to the science class room. **Embalming is more of a science**."<sup>4</sup> "[O]ur open statement ... 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.** ... it is not nice to discuss all this behind his back."<sup>4</sup>

**David C. Johnston, ISU Physicist.** Says that Dr. Gonzalez's private views on ID are unwelcome because they hurt the department's public relations:

- "The recent faculty petition and newspaper articles on his views demand that our department examine this issue. His 'private life' has now become an unwelcome part of the public life of our department and the university, with unpleasant consequences."<sup>5</sup>

**Curt Struck, ISU Astronomer.** Upset about Dr. Gonzalez's book supporting ID before he could have even read it:

- "In less happy news, Guillermo has a book coming out in April ... Earth's priveleged [sic] place in the universe and intelligent design. Steve K[awaler] is very upset about possible impacts. I guess I'm rather sad that he wants to be so very public about something that I see as **intellectually vacuous**, though it may be spiritually satisfying."<sup>6</sup>

**Lee Anne Willson, ISU Astronomer.** Strongly opposes ID and believes it is a religious threat to science, and holds ID is not a legitimate pursuit for scientific research:

- "Actually, I think it is **more than just vacuous**; he is supporting a movement that is endangering science..."<sup>7</sup> "[E]xtraordinary evidence of design is required before most scientists will consider this a legitimate direction

<sup>1</sup> 11/19/2005 e-mail from Joerg Schmalian to Eli Rosenberg, John Clem, Sergei Budko, Paul Canfield, Doug Finnemore, Bruce Harmon, and Vladimir Kogan (emphasis added).

<sup>2</sup> 11/22/2005 e-mail from Joerg Schmalian to Bruce Harmon, Sergei Budko, John Clem, Vladimir Kogan, Doug Finnemore, and Paul Canfield (emphasis added).

<sup>3</sup> 11/27/2005 e-mail from Joerg Schmalian to Bruce Harmon, Sergei Budko, Doug Finnemore, Vladimir Kogan, Paul Canfield, and John Clem (emphasis added).

<sup>4</sup> 11/22/2005 e-mail from Vladimir Kogan to Bruce Harmon, Sergei Budko, Joerg Schmalian, John Clem, Doug Finnemore, and Paul Canfield (emphasis added).

<sup>5</sup> 8/27/2005 e-mail from David C. Johnston to Eli Rosenberg.

<sup>6</sup> E-mail from Curt Struck to Lee Anne Willson and Steve Kawaler (emphasis added).

<sup>7</sup> 2/17/2004 e-mail from Lee Anne Willson replying to Curt Struck's (emphasis added).

for research. ... intelligent design is religion, not science.”<sup>8</sup> Willson’s husband, an ISU mathematician signed a petition by the National Center for Science Education condemning ID as “creationist pseudoscience.”

**Steve Kawaler, ISU Astronomer.** Hopes there will be ideological “cleansing” for Gonzalez, mocks religious faith, appears to prejudge Gonzalez’s tenure as he looks forward to the situation ultimately getting “better,” and worries about *appearances* of fairness far more than actual fairness in the tenure process; Kawaler asserts there has been “damage” but hopes to avoid a lawsuit:

- When discussing Ohio’s science standards, he mocked intelligent design stating: “Have you seen the Ohio board of education now requires ‘intelligent design’ to be taught alongside biological evolution? **‘God created the Universe for us,’ said little Bobby. ‘That’s what my science teacher told me.’** These two events aren’t unrelated. But given the Discovery Institute affiliation of GG’s coauthor, perhaps exposure to the light is going to be a **cleansing event.**”<sup>9</sup> “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. Damage has been done, and more will happen. We need to minimize that damage. Pushing ahead with this statement will serve no purpose but to increase the damage I feel.”<sup>10</sup>
- Hypocritically, Kawaler admits that signing public statements attacking ID would demonstrate a “hostile work environment,” but he himself signed a petition by the National Center for Science Education condemning ID as **“creationist pseudoscience.”**<sup>11</sup>

**John Clem, ISU Physicist.** Prejudges Gonzalez’s tenure case as he anticipates Gonzalez’s departure from ISU, and expresses worry about undeniable evidence of a hostile work environment:

- **“Many of us here at Iowa State are embarrassed** by the work of Guillermo Gonzalez, who with Jay Richards published the book “The Privileged Planet.”<sup>12</sup> When trying to convince his department not to issue a public statement against ID, he wrote: “[L]awyers might well be successful in convincing a jury of average Americans that publication of our statement was responsible for creating a **hostile work environment.** ... **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.**”<sup>13</sup>

**John Lajoie, ISU Physicist.** Sees ID as a threat to Western civilization:

- “This whole intelligent design thing is nothing more than a dressed-up attack on accepted western scientific thought and principles - principles that have given us modern human society.”<sup>14</sup>

**Bruce Harmon, ISU Physicist.** Prejudges Gonzalez’s tenure case explicitly admitting that ID will play a major negative role in tenure evaluations, holds Gonzalez to a higher standard because he supports ID, mocks ID and hopes for its “destruction,” even seeing the demise of Gonzalez as linked to the failure of ID; he laments Gonzalez’s impact on the department’s reputation but admits unethical nature of the secret tenure deliberation e-mails:

- **“Under medication** I decide to watch ‘The Privileged Planet’ last night. ... It saved the message until the last minute, when the argument became ‘... **now we can rejoice there is a meaning to everything.**’ I suspect that is how **primitive humans** explained things, and then rejoiced. It is a long way from science. ... This one could approach a supernova during and particularly after the tenure meetings. I bet ISU even makes the international press (How many days?). Maybe we should help Eli gird his loins before he loses them.”<sup>15</sup> “I still suspect the [Discovery Institute] views Guillermo’s case as their best chance for establishing ID as a science. **Let’s hope some more self destruction occurs in the next year.**”<sup>16</sup> “I know we have all been concerned about the

<sup>8</sup> 10/3/2005 e-mail from Lee Anne Willson to Curt Struck and Steve Kawaler.

<sup>9</sup> 3/12/2004 e-mail from Steve Kawaler to Eli Rosenberg.

<sup>10</sup> 11/21/2005, e-mail from Steve Kawaler to Bruce Harmon (emphasis added).

<sup>11</sup> See 10/5/2004 e-mails between Steve Kawaler and Glenn Branch (staff member of the National Center for Science Education). See also

[http://www.ncseweb.org/resources/articles/3541\\_project\\_steve\\_2\\_16\\_2003.asp](http://www.ncseweb.org/resources/articles/3541_project_steve_2_16_2003.asp) and [http://www.ncseweb.org/resources/articles/3697\\_the\\_list\\_2\\_16\\_2003.asp](http://www.ncseweb.org/resources/articles/3697_the_list_2_16_2003.asp)

<sup>12</sup> 8/8/2005 e-mail from John Clem to Lawrence Krauss, then forwarded on 8/9/2005 to Vladimir Kogan, Sergei Budko, Paul Canfield, Doug Finnemore, Eli Rosenberg, and Joerg Schmalian (emphasis added).

<sup>13</sup> 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).

<sup>14</sup> 6/3/2005 e-mail from John Lajoie to Eli Rosenberg, John Hill, Marzia Rosati, and Craig Ogilvie.

<sup>15</sup> 7/20/2005 e-mail from Bruce Harmon to Eli Rosenberg and Paul Canfield (emphasis added).

<sup>16</sup> 12/04/2005 e-mail from Bruce Harmon to Paul Canfield and Eli Rosenberg (emphasis added).

national ID debate and the damage it is doing to our department's reputation, particularly when the only viewpoint associated with us is pro ID."<sup>17</sup> **"I don't think talking behind Guillermo's back is quite ethical."**<sup>18</sup> "Do we do everything at **secret meetings** and the hope the Discovery Institute Lawyer's [sic] don't subpoena our records?"<sup>19</sup> "If Gonzalez pursued ID as a personal hobby I probably would not notice or care. I'm afraid he considers himself a disciple."<sup>20</sup> "[ID] 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**. ... P.S. Gonzalez may sell enough copies of this book to retire, and **solve us the potentially difficult issue**."<sup>21</sup> "As Joerg says, I think Gonzalez should know that **some faculty in his department are not going to count his ID work as a plus for tenure**. Quite the opposite. If he devotes his time to hard core astronomy and his case is based on work separate from ID then I might choke (because I regard his 'hobby' as detrimental to science) but **I could live with a strong case getting tenure. I don't see that happening right now**."<sup>22</sup>

**Hector Avalos, outspoken atheist Professor of Religion at ISU.** (Avalos did not vote on Dr. Gonzalez's tenure.) Privately admits that his petition targeted Gonzalez and works behind the scenes to support public attacks on Gonzalez:

- In 2005, Avalos spearheaded a petition signed by over 120 ISU faculty calling on "all faculty members to ... reject efforts to portray Intelligent Design as science." Despite Avalos's public denials of any intent to target Gonzalez,<sup>23</sup> e-mails show that Avalos marketed his petition as encouraging colleagues to combat the "negative impact" of the "presence" of ID at ISU, patently implicating Dr. Gonzalez: "Intelligent Design ... **has now established a presence, even if minimal, at Iowa State University**. Accordingly, if you are concerned about the **negative impact** of intelligent design on the integrity of science and **on our university**, please consider signing."<sup>24</sup>
- Avalos also worked behind the scenes to discredit Gonzalez, forwarding information to a blogger affiliated with a widely read pro-evolution blogsite in order to make it appear that Gonzalez "twisted" the arm of a person in campus ministry to write a supportive letter.<sup>25</sup>

**John Hauptman, ISU Physicist.** Publicly admitted he voted against Gonzalez's tenure because of ID while privately admitting that Avalos's petition and the ISU Department of Physics and Astronomy "violated massively" Gonzalez's academic freedom. Meanwhile, he privately lumped Gonzalez with "idiots" and "religious nutcases":

- Writing to Hector Avalos: "The mere statement that you had to 'depersonalize' the petition makes my point. It was aimed at Guillermo. ... I sensed at the time that this petition had **the smell of an academic lynch mob** ... [D]o you see how your petition played into their hands? You can make martyrs this way. I suspect that your petition and every name on it will be used in the coming legal proceedings. **Sometimes it is just best to ignore idiots ... freedom of inquiry ... has been violated massively in the physics department and, concerning my use of the word reprehensible, was violated by your petition**. Your petition was more than 'merely saying ID is not science.' ... It had to do with Guillermo. ... I do understand the rationale for your petition, do not disagree with it, and believe the **religious nutcases** should be challenged at every opportunity, but in ways that do not hand them more free publicity."<sup>26</sup>
- Public admission that he voted against Gonzalez as a result of ID: "I participated in the initial vote and voted no, based on this fundamental question: What is science? ... It is purely a question of what is science and what is not, and a physics department is not obligated to support notions that do not even begin to meet scientific standards."<sup>27</sup>

<sup>17</sup> 11/21/2005 e-mail from Bruce Harmon to Doug Finnemore, Sergei Budko, and Paul Canfield, also seen by Joerg Schmalian, Vladimir Kogan, and John Clem.

<sup>18</sup> 11/22/2005 e-mail from Bruce Harmon to Steve Kawaler (emphasis added).

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

<sup>20</sup> 11/28/2005 e-mail from Bruce Harmon to Vladimir Kogan and Joerg Schmalian.

<sup>21</sup> 9/23/2005 e-mail from Bruce Harmon to Hugo Fritz Franzen (emphasis added).

<sup>22</sup> 11/27/2005 e-mail from Bruce Harmon to John Clem, Sergei Budko, Doug Finnemore, Joerg Schmalian, Vladimir Kogan, and Paul Canfield (emphasis added).

<sup>23</sup> See Michael Clough, James Colbert, Hector Avalos, "Story misrepresented professors' ID petition," *Iowa State Daily* (March 3, 2006), at <http://media.www.iowastatedaily.com/media/storage/paper818/news/2006/03/03/Opinion/Letter.Story.Misrepresented.Professors.Id.Petition-1653598.shtml> (asserting, "The statement we wrote was in no way targeted specifically at Gonzalez").

<sup>24</sup> 8/2/2005 e-mail sent by Hector Avalos (emphasis added).

<sup>25</sup> 9-1-05 e-mail from Hector Avalos to Tara Smith.

<sup>26</sup> 6/5/2007 e-mail from John Hauptman to Hector Avalos (emphasis added).

<sup>27</sup> John Hauptman, "Rights are Intact: Decision Rests on 'What is Science?'," *Des Moines Register* (June 2, 2007).

**Eli Rosenberg, Chair of ISU Department of Physics and Astronomy.** Worried about how Gonzalez’s support for ID impacts the reputation of the department and encourages those voting on Gonzalez’s tenure to use his support for ID as a litmus test for tenure denial:

- When a scientist outside ISU contacted Rosenberg expressing concern that Gonzalez’s presence “does a large amount of damage to the academic reputation of the department,” Rosenberg replied by saying, “**Your concerns are legitimate.**”<sup>28</sup>
- When notice of Gonzalez’s publication of *The Privileged Planet* was announced in an ISU newsletter, Rosenberg called the news “Unfortunat[e]” and said “Houston we have a problem.....”<sup>29</sup>
- In his Chair’s statement in Dr. Gonzalez’s tenure file, Rosenberg instructed the department’s tenure committee that Gonzalez’s support for ID **is a litmus test that “disqualifies him from serving as a science educator.”**<sup>30</sup>
- As seen in the table below, **Rosenberg misrepresented to Dr. Gonzalez and to the media the actual role ID played in tenure deliberations:**

Timing and Context of Statement by Dr. Rosenberg about Dr. Gonzalez’s tenure:	Statement by Dr. Rosenberg about the role of ID in tenure deliberations:
Explanation of denial to Dr. Gonzalez, Nov. 2006:	Tenure meetings discussed ID “only briefly.”
Public Statement to <i>Nature</i> , May 24, 2007:	"intelligent design was not a major or even a big factor in this decision”
Public Statement to <i>Des Moines Register</i> , Dec. 1, 2007:	Tenure documents included “a few words about intelligent design at the end, and that's it.”
Rosenberg’s <b>actual views</b> in Chair’s Statement in Dr. Gonzalez’s Tenure File, Nov. 2006:	<p><b>A full third</b> of Rosenberg’s Chair’s Statement in Gonzalez’s dossier dealt with ID, stating that Gonzalez’s support for ID as science “<b>disqualifies him from serving as a science educator.</b>” Here are key excerpts:</p> <p>“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. <b>The fact that Dr. Gonzalez does not understand what constitutes both science and a scientific theory disqualifies him from serving as a science educator.</b>”</p>

Various things are clear from these e-mails and other documents:

- (1) Key ISU faculty that voted on Dr. Gonzalez’s tenure have an intense disdain for ID, and there is absolutely no question that ID was a major, if not an overriding factor in the denial of Dr. Gonzalez’s tenure.
- (2) Gonzalez’s foes never complained in e-mails about his academic track record as an observational astronomer; they only lamented about his views on ID.
- (3) Gonzalez’s foes hoped a department-wide condemnation of ID would make Gonzalez want to leave ISU.
- (4) Many implicitly expected that if Gonzalez did apply for tenure, he would be denied, thus discussing, debating, and effectively prejudging his tenure case in secret e-mails a year before the actual tenure deliberations.
- (5) These faculty sacrificed Dr. Gonzalez’s academic freedom to support ID to misplaced concerns about the department’s reputation and personal disdain for ID.
- (6) Their concerns primarily centered around outward appearances of fairness for legal purposes and they showed little, if any, real care for the true protection of Dr. Gonzalez’s academic freedom to support ID, even though ISU’s faculty handbook claims that “[a]cademic freedom is the foundation of the university.” They even sought to hide the discriminatory plans and unethical activities surrounding their secret e-mail tenure deliberations on Dr. Gonzalez.

<sup>28</sup> 5/28/2005 e-mail from Lars Ewell to Eli Rosenberg, Frank Krennrich, John Hill, and Steven Kawaler, and subsequent reply from Eli Rosenberg on 6-3-05 (emphasis added).

<sup>29</sup> 3/11/2004 e-mail from Eli Rosenberg to Steve Kawaler.

<sup>30</sup> Eli Rosenberg’s “Chair’s Statement” in Guillermo Gonzalez’s tenure dossier, page 29 of 33 (emphasis added).