

What follows is the full text of an email sent to the Dean of Science at Purdue, redacted to remove the names of the dean and department head.

Dear Dean [name redacted],

I'm writing to you regarding a situation that may lead to serious harm to the Purdue Math Department. It concerns Harold Donnelly, a distinguished mathematician and for many years a tenured professor at Purdue.

Over the last couple of years, Donnelly has been subjected to treatment that I believe will strike many as outrageous.

I'm convinced that the Purdue Math department will be significantly harmed if, as seems inevitable, the facts become widely known. I urge you to restore Donnelly to his previous working conditions before the damage is done.

Let me give a bit more detail:

I became aware of Donnelly's situation after he forwarded to me a mention of our joint work at a conference on topological data analysis. I asked him "How are you?". In reply he mentioned "unpleasant pressure to retire". I asked him to explain, and I reached out to a couple of Purdue mathematicians to learn more.

I was shocked to learn that:

- * After bad experiences teaching a service course (math 262) culminating in a disastrous experience during the pandemic, Donnelly was forbidden going forward to teach any course except math 262.

- * Moreover, he was forbidden to teach math 262 until, among other deliverables, he produced written lectures for the whole course, "ready for delivery with no ad libbing"

- * The Math Department Chair, [name redacted], threatened to reduce Donnelly's salary to zero and to recommend to the College that his tenure be revoked for "gross negligence"

- * In connection with a hearing to consider a grievance filed by Donnelly, [the department chair] asserted in writing that she had never threatened to reduce Donnelly's salary to zero.

- * Donnelly's salary is now set at zero.

In support of the above assertions, I attach a narrative and appendices, which I asked Leonard Lipshitz to produce.

If there are salient facts of which I'm unaware, justifying the actions taken against Donnelly, I would appreciate learning them from you. Unfortunately, in view of [the department chair's] written threat to zero out Donnelly's salary, followed by her written denial that she had made the threat, I have to ask you to support any such salient facts with hard evidence.

Of course, I'm an outsider to Purdue; you don't owe me any accounting. On the other hand, if there is a reasonable argument to be made in support of the actions taken against Donnelly, it would be in Purdue's

interest to make it known. As the case appears now, I believe it will be a strong disincentive to any mathematician considering a tenure offer from Purdue in the foreseeable future.

Yours sincerely,

Charles Fefferman

Math Dept, Princeton

CV: <https://www.math.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/2022-03/FeffermanCV.pdf>