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MU engineering professor suspended

Thursday, November 18, 2010 | 9:38 p.m. CST

BY [Megan Cassidy](#)

COLUMBIA — Greg Engel, an associate professor with MU's College of Engineering, was suspended indefinitely from classroom teaching this week after accusations of gender and racial discrimination were brought to the attention of his department chairman.

Noah Manring, chair of the department of electrical and computer engineering, said details about the complaint could not be disclosed.

"The matters pertain to personnel issues that are following a standard grievance process, brought against Dr. Engel by students in his class," Manring said in an e-mail.

Dean Lex Akers echoed Manring's citing of personnel issues and said he was unable to comment further.

Engel was informed of the suspension by e-mail Saturday. Although he said he is uncertain about his exact course of action, he plans to protest the suspension.

"At this point, I don't have a response," Engel said. "There has been no hearing, so I can't appeal."

He said the e-mail cited "sexual and racial discrimination" as grounds for the action, but the duration of the suspension was not included.

He said the issue is rooted in a case of academic dishonesty brought against three of his students earlier this semester. The students, all female and Chinese, claimed that plagiarism charges were based on gender and race.

Students have a number of procedures they can follow when filing a complaint against a professor, said Noel English, director of MU Equity for the Chancellor's Diversity Initiative. Options include taking a complaint to a faculty member or working through the dean's or provost's office.

Engel's attorney, George Smith, said he did not see anything improper about the way the students filed the complaint, but he believes Manring mishandled the situation once it was in his hands.

"There are procedures that the department chair is supposed to follow when complaints are filed through him, as they were in this case," Smith said.

Smith said after a complaint is filed, a department chair typically has a discussion with the faculty member to try and resolve the issue internally.

A discussion took place Friday, Smith said, with an agreement about a plan of action, but another meeting was held Saturday with a different outcome.

“My client learned via e-mail that a ‘special meeting’ was held on Saturday, where they voted to suspend him not only from the class where students complained, but also from a class where there were no complaints,” Smith said.

He questioned the propriety of the Saturday meeting.

Engel said he plans to explore internal options, such as writing letters to MU administrators, before looking into legal action.

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Comments

[Justin Ritter](#) November 18, 2010 | 10:40 p.m.

"Engel was informed of the suspension by e-mail..."

Wow, apparently his boss has no spine. Good thing he checked his email on a Saturday - his boss might have had to actually face him if he'd showed up for work on Monday morning...

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[Ellis Smith](#) November 19, 2010 | 5:30 a.m.

Judging from some of the names involved, this appears to be the latest chapter in a "soap opera" that the Tribune has been reporting upon. It's even more confused here than in the Trib.

La suerte de los tontos, and it appears there is no shortage of "tontos."

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