



“Condoleezza.” Other professors in the math department approved the exam, which was administered to approximately 450 students in 2004 and elicited no complaints. In March 2006, another professor distributed the same exam to students in the Math 099 class as a practice exam. After reading the exam, student Chelsey Richardson met with Math Department Chair David Stacy to express that she was offended by the fact that a prominent African American woman was mentioned in the same question with a watermelon. Stacy agreed to remove the exam from the departmental files.

On April 7, KOMO-4 local news ran a segment on the exam question. On April 10, Richardson met with BCC administrators and local activist Wayne Perryman to discuss the racial insensitivity of the question. After that meeting, media clamor intensified. Perryman sent a mass e-mail to his supporters asking them to “please e-mail the college and express your outrage... I am demanding that the college to do several things to correct the problem.” On April 12, *The Seattle Times* ran a story, and on April 14 the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle, chaired by BCC Trustee Paul Chiles, issued a press release calling the exam question “another example of hate and bigotry,” and asking you and BCC’s Board of Trustees to discipline the person responsible for the question. Media accounts of the exam question soon appeared in media outlets across the country.

On April 15, BCC’s Board of Trustees held a special meeting to discuss a reaction to Ratener’s test question. The Board of Trustees then issued a public statement that was



FIRE asks BCC to reverse Professor Peter Ratener's suspension. Professor Ratener has already endured intense media attention and public shame propagated by BCC—he must not also face official reprisal, in the form of suspension or in any other form. Please treat Ratener with the fundamental fairness to which he, as a tenured professor with a spotless record and 26 years of service to BCC, is due. FIRE is committed to using all of its resources to support Professor Peter Ratener in this matter, and to seeing this process to a just and moral conclusion. Because of the serious and continued violations of Professor Ratener's basic rights, FIRE requests a response by September 11, 2006.

Sincerely,