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March 8, 2003

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LOS ANGELES

## Instructor Placed on Leave Over Letters

By Rebecca Trounson, Times Staff Writer

A speech instructor at Citrus College has been placed on administrative leave after students complained that she told them they could earn extra credit by writing to President Bush to protest a possible war with Iraq, a college official said Friday.

Rosalyn Kahn, a part-time instructor at the two-year college in Glendora, told students in January that they would not receive extra credit if they used their letters to express other political views, including support for the war, said Samuel T. Lee, associate dean for language arts and foreign languages at the college.



In a separate extra-credit assignment, Kahn also asked her students to write to their state Senate representatives, discussing the state's budget crisis and cuts that have been proposed for community colleges. In particular, Lee said, Kahn asked her students to "protest the cuts on the grounds that adjunct faculty would lose their jobs and students would suffer." Kahn is an adjunct faculty member.

Late Friday, Lee said Kahn, who is in her first semester at Citrus, has been placed on paid administrative leave beginning next week. He said another instructor will take over her classes while administrators investigate the allegations.

"Obviously, from everything we can tell at this point, this was not appropriate," Lee said. "Teachers and students should be free to express their political views in an atmosphere of respect and tolerance. But where students are beholden to the views of the instructor, we need to be especially careful."

Kahn declined to comment Friday night, other than to describe the allegations as "100% lies."

Lee said that several students in Kahn's Speech 106 course approached him on Feb. 27 with concerns about the assignments and that after meeting with Kahn, he visited the class on Thursday. The students confirmed

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the specifics of the assignments, Lee said, and told him "they all understood that if they did not write a protest letter [to Bush], they would not receive credit."

Lee said he apologized on behalf of the college, and he assured the students that they would be allowed to complete alternative assignments expressing their own beliefs on the issues. The college also is sending letters of apology to Bush and to state Sen. Jack Scott (D-Altadena) explaining the circumstances, Lee said.

He said Kahn apparently collected the letters for Scott and told students she would deliver them to the senator herself at a political event.

Chris Stevens, a first-year student who was among those who complained, said he "wrote the letter to Bush but asked her not to mail it because it wasn't my political viewpoint. She refused, so I didn't turn it in and couldn't get credit."

Stevens, 20, said Kahn also asked students to sign postcards that were not addressed to anyone but "talked about how essential part-time instructors are."

The college's decision to place Kahn on leave followed a letter to administrators from the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, a Philadelphia-based civil rights group. Kahn's students had written to the group to request its intervention, said Thor Halvorssen, the group's executive director.

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