

April 15, 2006

We, the Board of Trustees of Bellevue Community College are deeply offended by the conduct of a math instructor at Bellevue Community College and strongly condemn this offensive behavior. This behavior is in gross violation of BCC's mission and core value of respect for diversity.

The instructor wrote an exam question that stated in part, "Condoleezza holds a watermelon just over the edge of the roof of the 300' Federal Building, and tosses it up with a velocity of 20' per second." The question went on to ask when the watermelon will hit the ground based on a formula provided.

It is important to note that this is a revised question. The original question referenced Gallagher, a comedian whose humor involves smashing watermelons and other fruit. The Bellevue Community College math instructor deliberately chose to change the question resulting in a question which was racially insensitive and demeaning to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, the students in his class who were expected to respond to the question, and the BCC community.

We want to commend the BCC students for bringing the egregious question to our college's attention and apologize to the students that were asked to respond to a question that reinvoked negative stereotypes.

We recognize the difficult and complex challenges this instructor's insensitive conduct has created for our college. We, the Board, have asked the President of the College to review this conduct and take appropriate disciplinary action. This type of incident is wrong and unacceptable at our institution. We are also asking that the college examine the curriculum and practices of all its departments to eliminate the use of unacceptable negative stereotypes in the future.

We have confidence in the efforts of our President, Jean Floten, in bringing the college community together to provide ways to assure an excellent academic experience and cultural environment for all of our students. We also support strengthening and furthering our work in providing an environment where teaching and learning take place with full respect for the dignity of each individual.

Board of Trustees
Bellevue Community College