

Gary J. Ferland

From: Mike Cavagnero [mike@pa.uky.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, October 03, 2007 11:57 AM
To: Gary J. Ferland; Keith B. MacAdam; Nancy Levenson; Tom Troland; Sally Shafer; Steve Ellis
Subject: something to think about

Please treat this email, as in all personnel matters, as strictly confidential. In particular, do not forward or copy it to anyone.

One of our faculty members who is not on the committee has expressed some concern about Martin Gaskell's websites discussing science and religion. That individual suggested that there are people in KY who might use his appointment as an opportunity to push a particular religious agenda, in particular, creationism. He suggested, in particular, that we might one day wake up to a Herald-Leader headline citing "UK hires creationist as Observatory Director." Such a headline would probably not be a fair representation of Martin's personal views, which are not simple, but the headline could appear nonetheless.

I was concerned about this issue, and so sent an email to the Dean and Provost, asking for their advice. I suggested that they have a look at his website

<http://incolor.inetnebr.com/gaskell/genesis.html>

There response is appended below, and you should all read it carefully. It indicates the standard to which we will be held should Martin be appointed.

Of paramount importance, at least in my mind, is Martin's rights of free speech and religious freedom. However, it seems reasonable to anticipate that, as a permanent member of our staff, as a teacher, and as an outreach director, his views would eventually become widely known.

Mike Cavagnero

From: Swamy

I completely agree with Steve. The paper uses his Nebraska byline, and the paper imputes the authority of his status as a scientist.

-----Original Message-----

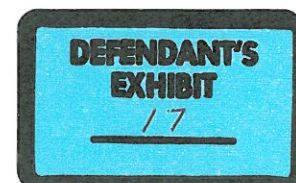
From: Hoch, Steven
Sent: Monday, October 01, 2007 11:51 AM
To: 'Mike Cavagnero'
Cc: Subbaswamy, Kumble
Subject: RE: some advice

Mike,

Here are my thoughts.

The URL you give below, in my view, should be considered a scholarly paper. Gaskell identifies himself with the University of Nebraska and states that these notes have formed the basis for public talks he has given at a number of universities. Therefore, I suggest that the committee needs to determine whether this paper and others he might have written are good science.

As Director of the Observatory, he is being hired for his scientific knowledge. For example, is the "young earth creationist position" he advocates supportable on the basis of the standards of science?



Similarly, when he asks "when was the beginning?" (p. 7), and uses astronomy to answer that question, does he do so using standards that accord with good science? Does the literature he cites reflect the current state of the discipline or is he privileging certain materials because of their theological provenance and prominence?

Given the nature of the position, I think assessing the value of his scholarly work is central to making an appointment.

Steve

Steven L. Hoch
Dean
College of Arts and Sciences