

## LABOR RELATIONS ADMINISTRATIVE INVESTIGATION REPORT

Conducted by: Christopher R. Henderson, Labor Relations Associate, Connecticut State Colleges and Universities

Location: Manchester Community College

File Date: November 2, 2018

### A. Subject of Investigation:

- Charles Meyrick, Assistant Professor of Business and Economics, Housatonic Community College

### B. Persons Interviewed:

1. Kathryn Kleis-Carbone, MCC Criminal Justice Department Chair
2. Tuesday Cooper, MCC Interim Academic Dean
3. Lt. Michael Davis – Manchester Community College Police Department
4. Michael Stefanowicz, Interim Associate Vice President Academic and Student Affairs
5. Greg DeSantis, Interim Executive Director of Student Success and Academic Initiatives
6. Dr. Francine Rosselli-Navarra, Professor & Chair, MCC Department of Psychology/Anthropology
7. Heidi Zenie, Program Coordinator & Professor of Sports and Leisure Management and Exercise Science, Three Rivers Community College
8. Dr. Miah LaPierre-Dreger, Capital Community College Interim Dean of Academic Affairs
9. Victoria Bozzuto, Dean, Workforce Development and Continuing Education
10. Dr. Brian Donohue-Lynch, Professor of Anthrophony and Sociology, Quinebaug Valley Community College
11. Professor Elizabeth Steeves, Housatonic Community College, Chemistry

### C. Employment History

- Employment History
  - 9 years, 3 months, and 10 days
- No discernible performance or disciplinary issues

### D. Collateral Information (Evidence/Relevant Information Reviewed)

- A. Manchester Community College Police Report – 11/2/18 (with accompanying picture)
- B. Picture of Mr. Meyrick Holding Nazi Salute
- C. Administrative Leave Letter – Dated November 2, 2018
- D. Text Message from Greg DeSantis to President Broadie November 2, 2018
- E. Written Statement of Michael Stefanowicz
- F. Written Statement of Greg DeSantis
- G. CSCU President Message to CSCU Community 11/5/18
- H. Email from Dr. Marsha Bryant to Dr. Miah LaPierre-Dreger 11/2/18
- I. Connecticut Community College Policy on Violence Prevention and Response
- J. Congress of Connecticut Community Colleges Collective Bargaining Agreement – Article XVI Dismissal and Discipline.

### E. Narrative

On November 2, 2018 at a Consolidation meeting at Manchester Community College, it was reported that Professor Charles Meyrick became very irate with program presenters to the point where numerous community members felt uncomfortable with his remarks and conduct. Some attendees left the meeting temporarily for reasons of discomfort and personal safety. During Mr. Meyrick's exchange with the forum presenters, Mr. Meyrick sat down and yelled "Sieg Heil" and raised his hand in a Nazi salute. Mr. Meyrick remained in this position for upwards of ten minutes. It was at the point that Michael Stefanowicz, one of the presenters, mistakenly believed Mr. Meyrick was asking a question that Mr. Meyrick put his hand down.

At the conclusion of the auditorium program, Mr. Meyrick proceeded to one of the breakout rooms. He was confronted by Manchester Community College police, who were previously called to the auditorium based on reports of a disturbance, and asked Mr. Meyrick to leave the campus. Mr. Meyrick responded with, "What if I don't?" to which police informed him that he would be placed under arrest.

It was also reported that Mr. Meyrick has a history of outbursts and disruption at previous consolidation committee meetings.

An investigation commenced conducted by staff at the CSCU system office.

## **F. Interviews/Action Taken**

1. Kathryn Kleis-Carbone, MCC Criminal Justice Department Chair – Interviewed In-Person on November 5, 2018

Professor Kleis-Carbone is starting her 4<sup>th</sup> year at Manchester Community College. Hired as an Instructor, she now holds the rank of Assistant Professor. She is currently the chair of the Criminal Justice department on campus. She runs the program for upwards of three hundred students. Professor Kleis-Carbone is a member of the Consolidation Committee. On November 2, she attended the meeting in the MCC auditorium. In the large auditorium with two to three hundred others in attendance she took her seat in the second tier of the auditorium, on the far left facing the stage. Mr. Meyrick was seated several rows in front of her. Professor Kleis-Carbone stated that she has not had any prior interactions with Mr. Meyrick.

Professor Kleis-Carbone states that Mr. Michael Stefanowicz took to the stage and began the presentation. Mr. Stefanowicz provided opening remarks and contextual commentary to the day's agenda. At the point in the presentation where Mr. Stefanowicz was discussing concentration requirements in light of the consolidation, Mr. Meyrick raised his hand and proceeded to "scream", as Professor Kleis-Carbone put it, at Mr. Stefanowicz. Mr. Meyrick yelled words to the effect of "we will not be lied too", referring to the event as a "farce" and a "waste of time". At this point, Professor Kleis-Carbone commented that a few participants began clapping. Mr. Stefanowicz attempted to defuse the situation but Mr. Meyrick continued proclaiming his first amendment rights to speak out. Professor Kleis-Carbone noted that soon after Mr. Meyrick's actions, he raised his hand in the Nazi salute. Professor Kleis-Carbone remarks that many audience members began walking out of the auditorium. Professor Kleis-Carbone stated that Mr. Meyrick continued to hold the Nazi salute for approximately ten minutes. She notes that Mr. Stefanowicz finally noticed Mr. Meyrick's hand up, believing he was simply raising his hand, and commented that he did notice his hand up and wondered if Mr. Meyrick had any questions.

During such time, MCC campus police responded to the scene and positioned themselves to be in the aisles on each side of Mr. Meyrick. Given the set-up of the auditorium, Professor Kleis-Carbone speculated that Mr. Meyrick likely could not see them.

At the conclusion of the event, Professor Kleis-Carbone stated that the MCC Police Lieutenant asked Mr. Meyrick to leave and Mr. Meyrick responded with words to the effect of "what if I don't?" to which the Lieutenant stated he would be placed under arrest.

Professor Kleis comments that Mr. Meyrick's behavior was disrespectful, unwarranted, and clearly done to incite the crowd. Mr. Meyrick's behavior made her feel "uncomfortable". She, however, did not think, given his body language, that his behavior would escalate to the point of violence. Since Mr. Meyrick's actions occurred early in the day's program, she noted that it disrupted the rest of the day's agenda. She also commented that she did not hear Mr. Meyrick say any words to the effect of praising Adolph Hitler.

2. Tuesday Cooper, MCC Interim Academic Dean – Interviewed In Person November 5, 2018

Dean Cooper has been the Interim Academic Dean since July 2018.

Dean Cooper was in the auditorium on November 2, 2018. She sat about four rows in front of Mr. Meyrick. She notes that Mr. Stefanowicz began the presentation, and eventually proceeded to discuss concentration requirements. It was at this point, Dean Cooper says, Mr. Meyrick began his "rant" becoming more and more aggressive the longer he spoke. She said that Mr. Meyrick called the meeting a "waste of time" and commented about the fact that participants had "no say" in the implementation of the consolidation. She notes that he temporarily calmed down after Mr. Stefanowicz diffused the situation. Mr. Meyrick continued to interrupt the meeting until he, as Dean Cooper comments, put his hand up in the Nazi salute and said "Heil Hitler" and something to the effect of "Heil Mein Fuhrer".

During Mr. Meyrick's verbal exchange, the campus police were called and Dean Cooper greeted Officer Mulligan and Officer Fox in the auditorium atrium area. She noted that after Mr. Meyrick raised his hand in a Nazi salute, many attendees began exiting the auditorium. While outside the auditorium, she heard one colleague, Dr. Francine Rosselli-Navarra, say, "I am not going back in there as long as he is there". Dean Cooper had Mr. Stefanowicz and others talk with Officer Fox about what they had witnessed. A conversation with Officers ensued about whether to remove Mr. Meyrick from campus. They decided that they did not want to escalate the situation further. However, MCC Interim CEO Tanya Millner-Harlee was briefed on the matter and directed the removal of Mr. Meyrick from the campus. It was also decided that he would be asked to leave the campus after the auditorium program before the participants went to breakout sessions.

Dean Cooper commented that despite living through the struggles of civil rights and hearing racial slurs lodged at her, she felt Mr. Meyrick's actions caused her to feel, as she describes it, "unnerved".

3. Lt. Michael Davis – Manchester Community College Police Department – Interviewed In-Person, November 6, 2018

Lt. Davis stated that officers were dispatched to the auditorium on November 2, 2018 for reports of a disturbance. Lt. Davis was on another call so he assigned Officer Fox and Officer Mulligan to respond. Their summary is provided in the MCC police report attached herein as Exhibit A.

Lt. Davis arrived about 15 minutes after the initial call. At that time, Interim Academic Dean, Tuesday Cooper, greeted Lt. Davis. Initially, Lt. Davis was concerned that Mr. Meyrick was still in the audience and not yet removed. At the time of his arrival, Mr. Meyrick was seated quietly. Lt. Davis learned that Mr. Meyrick was aggressive in his behavior and interrupted the speakers. He stated that Mr. Meyrick assumed the Nazi salute and held the Nazi salute for approximately 10 minutes. Lt. Davis again remarked that Mr. Meyrick should have been removed right away for violations of the state's zero tolerance policy on workplace violence, as well as violations of state law, namely breach of peace.

Lt. Davis learned that Interim CEO Tanya Millner-Harlee wanted Mr. Meyrick removed prior to the commencement of the breakout sessions post the auditorium program. Once the auditorium program concluded, Lt. Davis approached Mr. Meyrick informing him that they would like him to leave campus for violations of the law and state/college policy. Lt. Davis commented that Mr. Meyrick responded with, “what if I don’t?” to which Lt. Davis answered “You’ll be arrested, your choice”. Lt. Davis said that the two officers casually escorted him from campus. Lt. Davis commented that at no point did Mr. Meyrick raise his voice. He commented that it seemed to be a relief for others that Mr. Meyrick was removed.

4. Michael Stefanowicz, Interim Associate Vice President Academic and Student Affairs –  
Interviewed In-Person on November 5, 2018

Mr. Stefanowicz provided the investigator with a written statement attached herein as Exhibit E. In addition to the written statement, Mr. Stefanowicz provided the following information: Mr. Meyrick is a member of the Consolidation Committee. Mr. Stefanowicz reflects that Mr. Meyrick has been disruptive at previous meetings to the point where the Committee could barely get through their approved agenda.

On November 2, 2018, Mr. Stefanowicz presented a PowerPoint presentation on Program Consolidation Guidelines. At the point of discussing guidelines related to Common, Differentiated, and Unique programs, Mr. Meyrick raises his hand to ask a question related to those programs. Mr. Stefanowicz answered and Mr. Meyrick began yelling loudly at Mr. Stefanowicz. Mr. Meyrick said to Mr. Stefanowicz, “You’re lying to me” and “I don’t need to sit here and be lied too”. Since Mr. Meyrick became angrier, Mr. Gregory DeSantis mentioned the need to call the police. Mr. Meyrick then accused the presenters of silencing him and violating his free speech rights.

Mr. Stefanowicz attempted to move on with the presentation. According to Mr. Stefanowicz, he did not notice that Mr. Meyrick had raised his hand in a Nazi salute due to the lighting in the auditorium. He believed Mr. Meyrick was simply raising his hand to ask a question. Noticing that Mr. Meyrick had his hand raised, not intending to joke or poke fun, Mr. Stefanowicz asked Mr. Meyrick if he had a question. Mr. Meyrick said no and eventually put his arm down. It was not until Mr. DeSantis told Mr. Stefanowicz that he had raised his hand in a Nazi salute as opposed to simply raising his hand to ask a question. Mr. Stefanowicz reflected that Mr. Meyrick’s conduct did not cause him to believe that his safety was at risk, but say his interruptions and behaviors were harassing. Mr. Stefanowicz additionally noted that many others in attendance were concerned Mr. Meyrick would become violent.

5. Greg DeSantis, Interim Executive Director of Student Success and Academic Initiatives,  
Interviewed In-Person on November 5, 2018

Mr. DeSantis provided the investigator with a written statement attached herein as Exhibit F. In addition to the written statement, Mr. DeSantis provided the following information: Numerous members of the audience appeared to leave the auditorium during Mr. Meyrick’s actions. One of which was Heidi Zenie who appeared visibly upset.

Mr. DeSantis felt “mad” about Mr. Meyrick’s actions on account of the events that took place at Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania less than a week prior. He was concerned about the potential for violence and described it as a “live concern”.

If Mr. Meyrick's intention in making Nazi gestures and Nazi statements in attempt to make parallels in the consolidation process and Nazi Germany, the nexus was not clear.

6. Dr. Francine Rosselli-Navarra, Professor & Chair, MCC Department of Psychology/Anthropology – Interviewed In-Person November 5, 2018

Dr. Rosselli-Navarra reports that Mr. Meyrick has engaged in disruptive behaviors at previous Consolidation Committee meetings. She believes that his behavior has escalated in each subsequent meeting. He continues to make the claim that the BOR is not honestly seeking the input of faculty while continuing to highlight the lack of power faculty have in the consolidation. He continues to interrupt and disrupt meetings based on these ideas.

She comments on the events of November 2, 2018 at MCC highlighting the fact that Mr. Meyrick was aggressive and hostile in tone in calling the presenters liars and making repeated claims about his lack of power. Dr. Rosselli-Navarra had to leave the auditorium because Mr. Meyrick's behavior was making her very uncomfortable. She was extremely shaken up about the incident. She also overheard others outside the auditorium asking whether it was safe to return to the auditorium. Dr. Rosselli-Navarra was fearful of including her name in the report out of concern that Mr. Meyrick would retaliate against her.

7. Heidi Zenie, Program Coordinator & Professor of Sports and Leisure Management and Exercise Science, Three Rivers Community College – Interviewed In-Person November 5, 2018

Professor Zenie was sitting in the front row. As reported by others, she heard Mr. Meyrick become increasingly verbally aggressive towards the presenters. She reported that the yelling was so loud and went on for so long that Mr. Meyrick's voice was hoarse and he became difficult to understand.

Professor Zenie made a presentation after Mr. Stefanowicz and Mr. DeSantis, and after Mr. Meyrick's aggressive behaviors, but prior to taking the stage, she informed fellow colleague Patricia Bouffard that she was scared. She reported that while she presented, Mr. Meyrick had his arm raised in the Nazi salute. She said she was shaking and scared out of her wits. She reported that she was happy there was a podium between her and Mr. Meyrick because it provided her with a source of protection should Mr. Meyrick's behavior escalated to violence.

She reflected that Mr. Meyrick has been belligerent at previous consolidation meeting. He constantly interrupts meetings and inhibits the committee from moving through the agenda. At one such meeting, she expressed an alternative view to Mr. Meyrick's about the consolidation but was initially afraid to do so because she felt threatened by him.

Notwithstanding the Nazi language and Nazi salute, his yelling alone contained such anger that she was afraid to be in the same room as him. She also reflected that it seemed Mr. Meyrick's behavior was getting more aggressive and angry at each consolidation meeting.

She noted that there as another consolidation meeting on November 6 at Housatonic Community College and contemplated not attending for fear of encountering Mr. Meyrick. She realized it was important for her to attend and did attend because she did not want to be silenced by him. However, she requested a security escort from the parking garage to the meeting location at HCC on that day.

8. Dr. Miah LaPierre-Dreger, Capital Community College Interim Dean of Academic Affairs  
– Interviewed Via Phone on November 6, 2018

Dr. LaPierre-Dreger has been a faculty member at Capital Community College since 2004 in Computer Technology. Since July 2018, she has served as the Interim Dean of Academic Affairs.

In her capacity as Dean she attended the consolidation summit at Manchester Community College on November 2, 2018. In commenting on the incident involving Mr. Meyrick, Dr. LaPierre-Dreger said that Mr. Meyrick has a history of questionable behavior on the consolidation planning committee. She highlighted the October 2018 meeting where Mr. Meyrick was so disruptive that the committee barely made headway on the agenda. She said she was disturbed by the lack of productivity at the meeting. She said that most of the time was spent dealing with Mr. Meyrick's parliamentary delays designed to obstruct the meeting. After the meeting, Dr. LaPierre-Dreger drafted an email to her colleagues to express her concern about what she witnessed at the October meeting. However, she never did send it.

In discussing Mr. Meyrick's actions, she noted that in the exchange with Mr. Stefanowicz, Mr. Meyrick's voice and tone escalated to the point where he was shouting. She referred to Mr. Meyrick's behavior as a tirade. Once Mr. Meyrick reached the pinnacle of his anger, he shouted "Sieg Hitler" and threw his arm out in the Nazi salute. It was around this time, approximately 11:44 am; she took out her camera and began filming. She filmed Mr. Meyrick for a period of 13 minutes. Mr. Meyrick did not lower his hand until Mr. Stefanowicz mistakenly believed he was simply raising his hand to ask a question. She observed during Mr. Meyrick's exchange, a handful of people left the auditorium.

She found Mr. Meyrick's behavior "extremely disturbing" but noted that Mr. Meyrick has been unprofessional before. She received an email from a fellow Capital colleague who reflected that she felt a threat to her well-being. Dr. LaPierre-Dreger also noted that Mr. Meyrick's actions had an effect on her that lasted several days. Despite his behavior being unprofessional, it crossed the line into an act of hate speech. She commented that it was incredibly insensitive in its own right, but more so in the context of the meeting. She also said that he may have been implying that the consolidation plan implementation without faculty input was like Nazi Germany, but it was unclear since he kept his hand in a Nazi salute for such a long period of time.

9. Victoria Bozzuto, Dean, Workforce Development and Continuing Education –  
Interviewed via phone on November 6, 2018.

Dean Bozzuto, as Dean of Workforce Development and Continuing Education is responsible for the college accreditation and workforce development.

Dean Bozzuto has an extensive background in healthcare and the requisite training to evaluate others and assess various emergency situations. As it relates to Mr. Meyrick, she feels his behavior has been escalating at each consolidation committee meeting and on November 2 it escalated to the point where he lost self-control.

When Mr. Meyrick's behavior began to escalate to a hostile level, Dean Bozzuto relocated to the side wall of the auditorium. She stated that she did so for safety reasons as she began to go into "responsibility mode" to protect herself and possibly others. She felt that the room was getting very tense and she reacted to the tenseness in the room by relocating herself to a safer location. In looking at

his facial expressions, body language, and the words and tone of what he was saying, she felt he was threatening and hostile and did not know what would happen next.

She noticed a former firefighter colleague also get up and position himself in a way to protect others from imminent harm. She also noticed that Elizabeth Steeves eventually sat next to him and helped calm Mr. Meyrick down. She also noted how others in the audience tried to ask questions to re-direct the focus away from Mr. Meyrick. In addition, she noticed others leaving the auditorium during Mr. Meyrick's escalation but could not recall how many people left as she was focusing on the behaviors of Mr. Meyrick for her own safety and that of others.

In regards to the meeting at Housatonic on November 6, she felt relieved to know that Mr. Meyrick would not be in attendance. She could attend this meeting without worrying about her safety. She also said that she has observed faculty discourse become passionate but Mr. Meyrick's behavior crossed a line.

10. Dr. Brian Donohue-Lynch, Professor of Anthropony and Sociology, Interviewed via phone on November 7, 2018

Dr. Donohue-Lynch has been a full-time faculty member in the social sciences for 25 years. Dr. Donohue-Lynch has had numerous roles as it relates to the consolidation, including but not limited to membership on the TAP/Pathways Committee, Faculty Implementation Committee, FERC, the Students First Consolidation Committee, and the General Education Committee.

Dr. Donohue-Lynch shares membership on the Students First Consolidation Committee with Mr. Meyrick. Dr. Donohue-Lynch provided some background context to the November 2 meeting. The agenda of November 2 covered many items that members of the committee already knew about. It was frustrating to some because they believed more of the focus would be on breakout sessions and dividing into workgroups. In addition to that, others shared some of Mr. Meyrick's concerns about the lack of voice in the process. At one consolidation meeting, Mr. Meyrick voiced these frustrations and made a motion to change the charge of the committee to include more faculty governance in the consolidation process. The committee tabled the motion. At the next meeting, much of the meeting was dedicated to addressing Mr. Meyrick's motion. As a result, not much was accomplished. Again, at another meeting, Mr. Meyrick used Robert's Rules of Order in such a way to slow down any progress.

On November 2, Mr. Meyrick had no Robert's Rules to channel his frustrations. Once Mr. Meyrick began disrupting the meeting and calling Mike Stefanowicz a liar, Dr. Lynch-Donohue felt that the meeting was not going to go well and would be a bust.

At one point during Mr. Meyrick's escalation, Dr. Donohue-Lynch left the auditorium to get some air since the auditorium environment was so tense. He reflected that people were getting nervous, some people were visibly shaken, and many were surprised Mr. Meyrick took his frustration that far when he raised his hand in a Nazi salute.

While Mr. Meyrick had valid points to raise, he lost his ground to stand on when he became increasingly hostile.

11. Professor Elizabeth Steeves, Housatonic Community College, Chemistry – Interviewed via phone on November 7, 2018

Professor Steeves has served as a full-time faculty member for 20 years. She has served as a TAP/FERC Co-Chair and TAP Coordinator since 2012.

Professor Steeves knows Mr. Meyrick best through their interactions in carpooling together to meetings at Gateway. Professor Steeves reported that she did not feel unsafe when Mr. Meyrick's behavior escalated.

When Mr. Meyrick's behavior escalated to the point of anger, MCC police were called, and she stood next to the police in the aisle. She told security that he was not a threat and said she would go sit with him. She did in fact go sit with him. She knew he needed a colleague to vent too and was surprised no other colleagues sat next to him. They discussed a possible question to ask the presenters and Professor Steeves characterized it as a non-controversial question.

She spoke to other people after the meeting and she described them as being fearful of Mr. Meyrick's display of anger. They did not feel that the meeting was a safe space. She commented that Mr. Meyrick's outburst was similar to an outburst by another faculty member at Housatonic.

12. Professor Charles Meyrick, Assistant Professor, Housatonic Community College –  
Interviewed in person on 11/15 at Housatonic Community College

Professor Meyrick is a nine-year employee at Housatonic Community College. He has taught courses in business, economics, and finance.

Professor Meyrick stated that he became part of the Consolidation Committee by way of a faculty majority vote. This vote occurred sometime in the Spring 2018 semester.

At the first Consolidation Committee of the 18/19 AY, on September 21, colleagues reported that Professor Meyrick made a motion to change the charge of the committee to augment the faculty voice in the consolidation process. At that time, the committee tabled the motion. Mr. Meyrick agreed this was true.

At the October 18, 2018 meeting, colleagues reported that Mr. Meyrick was disruptive during the discussion on his September 21 motion. The discussion on his motion took up the bulk of the meeting time. Others in attendance stipulated that the committee barely made it through the agenda. Mr. Meyrick responded that he did not believe he was disruptive. He believed he was simply operating within the parameters of Robert's Rules of Order. Contrary to being disruptive, Mr. Meyrick stated that he yielded the floor to others during the discussion. Again, Mr. Meyrick believed he was operating consistent with Robert's Rules of Order.

As it relates to the Consolidation Forum on November 2, Mr. Meyrick expressed that many hoped the majority of the meeting would be dedicated to working in groups on various areas of the consolidation process. He noted that he and others were frustrated to learn that the meeting was dedicated to conveying information rather than breaking into work groups.

Mr. Meyrick admitted to asking a question of Mr. Stefanowicz related to consolidating curriculum across community college campuses. He admitted to passionately expressing a dissenting opinion in response to Mr. Stefanowicz's answer. He admitted to calling Mr. Stefanowicz a liar, to saying that the whole process was tyrannical, and to stating that he did not need to sit [in the auditorium] and be lied too.



During the exchange, Mr. Stefanowicz asked Mr. Meyrick to leave the meeting due to his disruptive behavior. Mr. Meyrick saw this as an effort to silence him for expressing a dissenting opinion. Mr. Meyrick's sense of being silenced was compounded by hearing that Mr. DeSantis had called campus police to respond. In response, he raised his hand in Nazi salute and yelled "Sieg Heil". Mr. Meyrick admitted to both the salute and the statement.

When asked as to why he kept his hand up so long, reportedly ten minutes, he stated that during this time he realized what "an ass" he was. He contemplated how he could get out of the situation and felt as if he was stuck. It was not until Mr. Stefanowicz "thankfully", as Mr. Meyrick put it, asked if he had a question that gave him the opportunity to put his hand down.

On the subject of his interactions with Manchester Community College Police, Mr. Meyrick stated that he was en route to one of the breakout rooms when the police confronted him. There they asked him to leave the campus. Mr. Meyrick stated that he believed there was a choice to stay or leave so he asked "What if I don't?" When the police responded that they would place him under arrest, he realized there was no choice in the matter.

Mr. Meyrick was asked to reflect upon his actions. He characterized the salute and the Nazi statement as "miscalculations". When he was asked to leave, he felt that Mr. Stefanowicz was silencing dissent. When Mr. DeSantis called the campus police to respond, Mr. Meyrick believed this was a further attempt to silence him. In response, Mr. Meyrick tried to think of a way to show that silencing debate is tyrannical and wrong. His "miscalculation" was his way to show this. He never intended to alarm others, or cause others to feel threatened or scared. He directed his gesture to the presenter's efforts to silence him.

Mr. Meyrick further stated that he is willing to apologize in any way necessary – face to face to those alarmed, an email to that group, or a public apology. He expressed a desire to make amends, as he did not intend to harm anyone. He was simply responding to the threat to have him leave because he expressed a dissenting opinion. He stated he was not aware how others perceived his actions in the auditorium.

After the salute incident, he did not speak for the twenty minutes remaining of the forum portion of the meeting.

Mr. Meyrick informed the investigator that November 2 was days prior to an anticipated medical surgery. He stated that he had not realized how the stress of the procedure was affecting his behavior and actions.

Mr. Meyrick provided a note from his primary care physician that stated that he is under the care of their office and that they are working with him to determine possible medical reasons for his actions on November 2.

In addition, Mr. Meyrick stated that he had reached out to EAP for support and that he has scheduled appointments. He stated that those actions on November 2 are out of character for him and he is seriously seeking professional help for this behavior.

## G. Findings

Mr. Meyrick is a 9-year employee of Housatonic Community College. In Spring 2018, HCC Faculty members voted Mr. Meyrick to serve on the system-wide consolidation committee.

At the first meeting of the 18/19 academic year, Mr. Meyrick made a motion to change the charge of the committee to ensure more faculty input in the process. That motion was tabled until the October meeting.

At the October meeting, Mr. Meyrick resurrected his motion. Much of the meeting was dedicated to debating his motion. While Mr. Meyrick rightfully used Robert's Rules of Order, others found his behavior disruptive. Many reported that Mr. Meyrick seemed angry and as a result others were reluctant to express an alternative opinion. Mr. Meyrick's expression of his opinion is well within the rights and responsibilities of college faculty members, but the manner in which it is done is equally important. While this behavior alone is not problematic, taken in conjunction with the Mr. Meyrick's actions on November 2<sup>nd</sup> is a cause for concern.

There is no dispute that on November 2, 2018 at the consolidation forum at Manchester Community College, Mr. Meyrick asked Mr. Stefanowicz about a curriculum matter and subsequently began to aggressively argue with him. While Mr. Meyrick did not address the manner or style of his remarks in the investigation, it is well documented from eyewitnesses that he was loud and aggressive to the point, as one witness said, his voice became hoarse. It is also admitted that after this exchange with Mr. Stefanowicz, Mr. Meyrick in response to the Mr. Stefanowicz asking him to leave and Mr. DeSantis calling campus police, raised his hand in a Nazi salute and yelled "Sieg Heil". There is documented photo evidence of this salute in the police report. It was also provided to investigators from an eyewitness. Mr. Meyrick freely admitted to yelling "Sieg Heil" while a handful of other witnesses heard the same.

It also documented and admitted by Mr. Meyrick that Manchester Community College Police asked Mr. Meyrick to leave the campus while he was walking to a breakout room after the auditorium program. Mr. Meyrick did respond with the question, "What if I don't?" and MCC Police did inform him that if he did not, he would be placed under arrest.

With the facts undisputed, the question turns to whether Mr. Meyrick's actions violate BOR policies or provisions of the Congress of Connecticut Community collective bargaining agreement.

### *Policy on Violence Prevention and Response*

The CSCU Policy on Violence Prevention and Response prohibits violence in the workplace. "Violence" is defined in the policy as "an overt act or threat of harm to a person or property, or any act that poses a substantial threat to the safety of any person or property . . . Conduct that may violate this policy includes, but not limited to, the following: Intimidating, harassing or threatening behaviors . . . [or] any other act that a reasonable person would consider to constitute a threat of violence, including oral or written statements, gestures, or expressions that communicate a direct or indirect threat of physical harm."

Numerous witnesses commented how they felt their safety threatened by the actions of Mr. Meyrick in both his aggressive exchange with Mr. Stefanowicz and his subsequent Nazi salute and statement. One witnessed feared seeing him at subsequent meetings. Some witnesses were even afraid to speak with

the investigator for fear of retaliation by Mr. Meyrick. Other had a more nuanced response in that they did not feel threatened by Mr. Meyrick's actions but felt his actions went beyond the scope of acceptable academic discourse. One witness, Mr. Lynch Donohue, said that Mr. Meyrick expressed opinions others believed, but he lost his credibility when he yelled so aggressively and held up a Nazi salute and yelled "Sieg Heil". Finally, some audience members did not feel threatened at all. Many of them believe that the salute and the statement were a form of symbolic speech equating the silencing of his opinion to that of a tyrannical regime. It also clear from the witness testimony including that of Mr. Meyrick, Mr. Meyrick did not utter those words or use the salute to promote or support the cause of Nazism. This investigation adduced no evidence that Mr. Meyrick is a Nazi sympathizer or that he intended to engage in hate speech.

In analyzing the policy, Mr. Meyrick's actions were increasingly aggressive at each subsequent consolidation committee culminating in his actions on November 2. While Mr. Meyrick utilized Robert's Rules to express his opinion, it was done so in a manner that others found disruptive and unproductive. This was equally the case in the November 2 meeting. While certainly expressing a dissenting opinion is welcome and encouraged in an academic environment, the manner Mr. Meyrick did so was beyond acceptable discourse. To yell at a colleague calling them a liar, and making repeated remarks in such an aggressive and hostile tone, does not reflect the civility and collegiality so vital to the exchange of ideas. To then use a symbol of hate to express opposition to the efforts to create a respectful and civil environment at the meeting is a gross departure from the noble aims of academic debate.

The relevant provision of the Workplace Violence Policy constitutes violence as "[i]ntimidating, harassing, or threatening behaviors" or "any other act that a reasonable person would consider to constitute a threat of violence, including oral or written statements, gestures, or expressions that communicate a direct or indirect threat of physical harm." It is again documented that many felt threatened by his actions. Some members of the audience re-positioned themselves to increase the chances of escaping to safety in the event Mr. Meyrick became violent. This is ameliorated by the fact that the Tree of Life shooting in Pittsburg occurred only a few days prior. Therefore, when Mr. Meyrick raised his hand in a Nazi salute and shouted "Sieg Heil", the events at Tree of Life came rapidly into the minds of some members of the audience. One witness expressed the fear of violence as a "live concern". While Mr. Meyrick may not have intended that reaction, it is a reaction audience members had nonetheless.

Judging by a "reasonable person" standard, taking into account Mr. Meyrick's history of disruptive behavior on the consolidation committee, Mr. Meyrick's actions were objectively threatening and his gesture ( the Nazi salute) and his expression ("Sieg Heil") communicated an "indirect threat of physical harm". Mr. Meyrick's actions may not have communicated a "direct threat of physical harm" but they had the effect of doing so given his aggressive behavior up to that point.

As such, Mr. Meyrick's behavior can be described as an "act that poses a substantial threat to the safety of any person..." in direct contravention of the zero tolerance Policy on Violence Prevention and Response.

*Congress Collective Bargaining Agreement Article XVI. Section 1 (3) – "Conduct which impairs the effective performance of assigned responsibilities or impairs the rights of...other staff members*

Mr. Meyrick's conduct rose to the level that impaired the performance of assigned responsibilities in a number of ways. First, his behavior at Consolidation Committee meetings has escalated at each meeting

to the point where his behavior was so disruptive that it prevented the completion of the necessary tasks of the committee. Witnesses at each of the meeting described that he interfered with the objectives of the committee and actively sought to delay and obstruct the meetings. Again, while dissent is welcome and tolerated in an academic setting, it should not be so disruptive that it substantially hinders progress on essential agency committees. Mr. Meyrick's behavior at the November 2, 2018 by all accounts was disruptive, inappropriate, and extreme, particularly as it relates to shouting "Sieg Heil" and raising his hand in a Nazi salute for approximately ten minutes after spending so much time arguing aggressively with the meeting's facilitator. Mr. Meyrick's actions impaired his ability to be an effective member of the Consolidation committee.

In addition, his actions impaired the rights of other staff members. Numerous witnesses felt threatened by his action and feared for their personal safety. Some faculty members left the meeting due to his actions impairing their ability to be active participants in the meeting. In some cases, members expressed apprehension of speaking up at meetings or attending future meetings because of his conduct. In addition, Mr. Meyrick's behavior towards law enforcement was disrespectful and inappropriate. As stated by Lieutenant Davis, if Mr. Meyrick failed to leave, his arrest was imminent for violations of state statutes.

This violation is further supported by Mr. Meyrick's violation of the Policy on Violence Prevention and Response.

As such, Mr. Meyrick violated XVI Section 1(3) of the Congress Collective Bargaining Agreement.

## H. Recommendation

### *Discipline*

There is sufficient evidence to warrant disciplinary action for just cause pursuant to Article XVI of the Congress Collective Bargaining Agreement. Therefore, there is probable cause for this investigation to proceed to the next administrative level.

Respectfully Submitted by [Name of Investigator]

*Christopher R Henderson*

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Investigator)

Date: 12-11-18

Reviewed and Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
President

Date: