

## FAQ: Common Questions About the UChicago Physics 2025 Case

### Q: Why did you blow the whistle?

A: Because all internal channels had failed. The Chair left no room for appeal. The DGS avoided support and misconducted for years. The Provost's office dismissed my grievance on a technicality. Whistleblow was the last remaining act of integrity.

If you ask, "Why so drastic?" then ask instead:

*What kind of system makes public exile seem safer than private silence?*

### Q: Why publish this knowing it may harm your career or reputation?

A: Because staying silent would mean accepting that harm was deserved, justified, or inevitable.

### Q: What is meant by "shadow governance"?

A: It refers to a system where **real power operates informally**, behind procedural language — through selective enforcement, silent coordination, and lack of transparency. Decisions are made without accountability, and harm is normalized as policy.

### Q: What exactly did you face?

- Misconduct and suppression for years: The DGS and the Chair were unresponsive for years — yet held total power to decide my academic fate, whenever and wherever they want. They used vague language and unilateral framing to control outcomes while appearing "supportive."
- Dismissed without due process: No warning, no consultation, no appeal — yet decisive consequences. After receiving verbal assurance from Chair to restore me to good standing, I was dismissed in 48 hours, and later banned from campus for speaking out.

Throughout my five years as a PhD candidate, I experienced a systematic pattern of harm: mentor changes without transition support, public reprimands for minor issues, forced course registrations twice without justification, unsubstantiated plagiarism accusations without due process, repeated probation without prior consultation, and disproportionately high TA assignments without considering the cumulative burden. Ultimately, in my fifth year, I was dismissed without warning — based on a proposal requirement imposed without relevance to my actual research progress.

I was consistently subjected to **unilateral, mandatory tasks** that were imposed without proper procedural basis, but exploiting the discretionary freedom granted by vague and ambiguous policies. These severely disrupts students' usual progress.

### Q: What exactly did the DGS or Chair do wrong?

A: They set students as scapegoat to hide their own malfunction.

- Imposed obligations (courses, assignments, proposals) without due consultation or support;
- Interpreted minor incidents as formal violations with no independent review;
- Used private communication and ambiguous policies to override student rights;
- Blocked normal channels of clarification, then escalated matters into permanent sanctions;
- Operated behind procedural opacity, using policy language to shield discretion.

### Q: Isn't this just a case of academic underperformance and dismissal? Why frame it as whistleblowing?

A: On the surface, this may appear as a simple dismissal. In truth, it reflects a closed-loop system built on vague policies, unchecked authority, and skipped procedures:

- Sanctions imposed without consultation;
- Unequal access to academic guidance;
- Arbitrary goals imposed without transparency;
- Distress weaponized as grounds for removal;
- A closed logic that denies grievance *because* the dismissal already occurred.

These are not isolated administrative mistakes — they represent how **institutional power can systematically erase someone while avoiding responsibility**.

### Q: Why was the grievance denied?

A: The grievance was **not reviewed on merit**. It was rejected on the grounds that *dismissed students are no longer eligible to challenge their dismissal*. This **circular logic** means: once you are removed, you are permanently silenced.

### Q: Isn't this just a case of academic performance?

A: That's the narrative institutions prefer: "Not good enough." There was no consistent review, no feedback, and no due process to evaluate that claim.

You can't measure performance in a structure where expectations shift, rules are unspoken, and punishment comes without dialogue.

My academic track record and sustained research efforts over five years speak for themselves. On the contrary, the dismissal came abruptly, without consultation, and without prior notice. It was made unilaterally, without a committee, without evaluation criteria, and without any review meeting. The core issue is not whether I was capable of completing my studies, but **how the system defines failure and administers consequences without transparency or fairness.**

Underperformance, even if it occurs, requires support and clear criteria, not **sudden probation, surprise accusations, or contradictory tasks.** Students should not be punished in private, reprimanded in public, and discarded without record.

### **Q: What exactly are the “four mechanisms” you mentioned?**

- **Favor-Based Support:** Access to mentorship and academic resources is selectively granted only to “obedient” students, while those who are perceived as difficult or nonconforming are gradually excluded.
- **Opaque Labor Control:** Teaching assignments (TA) are used as tools of reward or punishment, rather than being distributed based on fairness or qualifications.
- **Accelerated Removal:** Students labeled as “problematic” are swiftly removed using vague standards and non-transparent processes, without consultation or due process.
- **Institutional Silence:** Every level of authority, the DGS, Chair, the Dean, the Provost— claims to “lack jurisdiction,” creating a system where no one takes responsibility. The result is exclusion without record, recourse, or accountability.

### **Q: Why does this matter beyond one student?**

**A:** These patterns are repeatable. They remain invisible precisely because each removal is quiet, each grievance can be dismissed on a technicality.

If students can be removed without cause — and then silenced for speaking — the system does not just fail. It protects itself from being questioned.

I observed that I was not the only one subjected to a similar pattern of suppression:

- Marginalization → increasing burdens → administrative neglect → quiet removal;
- Key administrative decisions often bypassed formal procedures and were made through “informal coordination” that excluded the student;
- Grievance technically exist, but are frequently blocked on procedural grounds before any substantive review can occur;
- Most remain silent not because speaking up is fruitless — and personally costly.

**These are not isolated incidents. They are symptoms of how authority and process are structured.**

### **Q: If what you say is true, why haven't any faculty publicly supported you?**

**A:** Whistleblowers are rarely surrounded by allies. Academia is a closed system, structured by hierarchy. Faculty who speak out risk marginalization, or being seen as “disruptive” or “non-compliant.”

In my case, I was banned from campus less than 24 hours after my letter was published. Many faculty became visibly cautious. Their silence doesn't prove I was wrong — yet, I do not expect agreement or understanding from all.

### **Q: What do you hope to achieve?**

- An **independent, third-party review** of graduate governance in UChicago Physics;
- Greater **procedural transparency**, especially around probation and dismissal;
- A cultural shift where **mentorship is not weaponized**, and dissent is not equated with disruption.

### **Q: How can others take action?**

- **Read** the [Whistleblower Letter](#)
- **Save or share** this record before it disappears;
- **Report your own experiences** through the [Provost's Grievance Form](#) or [Ombuds Office](#);
- **Reach out** to me directly ([physix2019@gmail.com](mailto:physix2019@gmail.com)) to contribute to future documentation.
- Talk to trusted faculty outside the power structure.
- If safe, find community — even outside your institution.

### **Q: Why this is Not about “Overreaction” or “Emotional Instability”?**

**A:** Because I gave the system every opportunity to correct itself. I trusted the internal processes. I documented facts in detailed memos, reports, and meeting records. I went through every official channel: department, Dean, Ombuds Office, Provost grievance form. I remained respectful and thorough in every formal communication.

This is not an emotional outburst. This is what happens when a system uses silence + procedural recursion to erase a voice, and leaves no choice but to go public.

Ask yourself: ***Was I the one being unreasonable — or was it the university that issued a permanent ban and legal threat just 48 hours after my letter?***

**Q: Why do you say that banning you is a confirmation of your letter's content?**

**A:** If my letter were completely baseless, why didn't the institution respond with evidence, transparency, or due process? Instead, it immediately invoked legal action to silence me. That reaction reflects exactly what I described: **a system that responds to criticism not with correction, but with suppression, punitive measures and exclusion.**