Valentin Mudiay: 0611470

July 6, 2020

Dr. Alfreda Dudley

Towson University

FCSM Grade Appeal

Dear Dr. Dudley,

I am now formally requesting that you change my grade in COSC418 for the Spring 2020 semester from 67.455%, D, or CRD, to a Passing C. I have seen and understand the breakdown of the grade. However, as stated in previous correspondence during the semester, the concern I am voicing is that the semester was completed during the breakout and height of a global pandemic that impacted my life and ability to complete assignments such as the Study Case #1 fully.

I have sent two very detailed emails, which will be added as attachments, voicing my concerns and my struggles during the COVID-19 pandemic. The first email was sent at 2:25 p.m. on April 27th and was a plea for you to understand the struggles that COVID-19 brought in my life from losing my only source of income, having no proper place to study, changing my living situation suddenly, and leaving me with financial concerns that plagued my mind during quarantine. You replied to that email at 2:33 p.m., eight minutes later. As to not alter your words, I have quoted your full response.

“Thank you for your email. I am sympathetic to your situation, as well as, ALL my students in the same or similar situations. (Although, I find it strange that you are emailing with concerns and complaints at this late date. I sent out an e-mail to students in the class on 3/20/2 detailing how this course was going to run after the university changed to an online policy. In addition, I have sent out emails and announcements weekly on all assignments. You did not comment and/or express any concerns, at that time, or before your correspondence today.That is why I will be consistent with my grading policies for this course. Your grades will be assess according to the policies set forth for this course on day one.I will not be addressing this issue and/or further comments.” - Dr. Dudley

“I am sympathetic of your situation”. This was the start of your reply. A student emails you during a global pandemic, voices his struggles which without a doubt are caused by extreme circumstances beyond anyone’s control, and you do not even take ten minutes to read and consider his circumstances. I am not ALL your students. Not all your students are the same or come from the same background. When a global pandemic hits the country to a national emergency level, not ALL your students face the same struggle. I do not care how many students you know; you do not know my circumstances based on any other student. You said you found it “strange” when I voiced my struggles. Dr. Dudley, I am a man who was born in a country in a war that led to the death of millions. I am a man who had to flee his home with his family as a kid, finding asylum refuge in the United States. I am a man who grew up in the urban environment of Baltimore City well below the poverty line. I a man whose family had to build from absolutely nothing. I am a man who went from war to sleeping on the floor of our first apartment in the U.S. I am the product of war, poverty, and struggles that most of your students and people, probably including yourself, never experience. Through all my struggles not a single person who has crossed paths with me can say I am anything short of a hardworking man who takes his education serious. I did not stumble my way into college. I worked extremely hard to sit in a class amongst ALL your students. Nothing in my life was handed to me and this degree that I am looking to complete in Fall 2020 is one that I went through hell to work for. You do not have the slightest idea of what I have lived through. I know what struggle is in life, and when I voice my concerns to share with a professor my struggles in her class I expect that she takes it serious instead of finding it “strange” that I am struggling in the middle of a pandemic. Do not put ALL your students in one category, as you do not know their lives. This is a very insulting thing to do. Not all your students come from the same background or live the same life. You have absolutely failed to even look at my situation. Also, if All your students were struggling to such extreme extents identical to mine, as you claim, you should have made adjustments for the entire class. Holding your students to standards set based on previous semesters that you have taught is wrong. Spring 2020 was completed in a state of emergency. Dr. Dudley not a single one of your previous students completed a semester under the second deadliest pandemic to hit the United States. You have never taught a semester in the middle of the second deadliest pandemic in U.S history, the deadliest pandemic in our lifetime. Your policies that you refused to adjust were not based on semesters completed under national emergency. It is very unethical for you to punish students who are struggling in the middle of a pandemic, which you claim was ALL your students. The institution of Towson University adjusted policies during COVID-19 which you as a professor benefited from, yet you did not extend that decency of flexibility to ALL your students.

Another huge issue was the comment of “I have sent out emails and announcements weekly on all assignments. You did not comment or express any concerns, at the time, or before your correspondence today” (Dr. Dudley). This strongly insinuates that you provided an opportunity for your students to come to you and voice their struggles for you to work with them, which you never did. I sent you a second email on May 22, 2020 that fully addresses how this is a false claim. I explained how the email you are referring to, sent on 03/20/20, to the class, absolutely failed to express any willingness of you to work with students struggling during the shutdown of Towson, the breakout of COVID-19, the State of Maryland quarantine shutdown, and the national lockdown. Although you claim to sympathize with my specific situation, you made absolutely zero effort to work with me, a struggling student amid the pandemic. My second email also went even further in depth into the struggles I dealt with and why I felt this grade was and still is unjust. You did not even have the decency to reply to the second email.

The 2.55% difference in grade point is one that makes the difference between me being able to pass this class and completing my final semester of Towson in Fall 2020. I believe those 2.55% points are well deserved because I am certain that my performance in your class would have been better than 67.45% if Towson did not shut down. I would also like to add, Towson shut down right as you assigned a Case Study worth 10% of the grade for us to complete during Spring “Break” as people were dealing with major changes and difficulties in their lives due to the national health crisis. Not only did you assign this Case Study at a moment of great chaos, but you sent an assignment announcement email to ALL students.(The type of updates and announcement emails that you referred to in your reply to me on April 27, 2020.) In this email you sent on March 10th about the Case Study #1., you said, “The Professor WILL NOT be answering questions regarding Case Study #1 after 3:30 p.m. on 3/11.". This grade alone would have put me well in the passing range for your class. Without talking about any other moment in the class, an easy solution could have been for you to allow me to do the Case Study#1 fully or even to make me start over with another article on the list you provided. There were so many ways you could have worked with me to come up with a solution to give me a fair chance to pass this class. You did absolutely nothing

I would now like to touch on my second email that goes into depth with the history of your communication to the class and how you failed to express any willingness to be adaptable with students in the face of a pandemic which altered the lives of people throughout the world. From the very first lecture of the semester you stressed how strict you were and how students should not “mess with Dr.Dudley”. I will not quote anything said because the words spoken in that lecture are not documented. However, there are documented communications throughout the semester, and there was never a tone of open communication. Before I wrote the second email I went back and read every single one of your emails, announcements, and blackboard posts available. In the entirety of the semester, Dr. Dudley, there was not a single time where you expressed any level of willingness to work with students struggling. In fact, like the assignment announcement email on March 10th, many of your emails did the opposite of showing willingness to be flexible with students. You posted assignments, gave a short window of time for students to communicate, if any at all (on some occasions you explicitly said students could not email you with question at all), and then set the date for blackboard submissions. Considering I did not receive a reply to my most recent email outlining in detail the specifics of my situation, I have attached it below for you to read. I took the time to write it and ask that you take the time to read my email from May 22, 2020.

With everything expressed in past communications, 67.45% is not a fair or just grade. The circumstances of Spring 2020 were extreme enough that professors should have been expected to work with students struggling during everything. COVID-19 goes down in history as one of the deadliest outbreaks in U.S history, currently second deadliest with an ongoing increasing death toll as of July of 2020. This breakout forced Towson University to close its campus. It forced states across the U.S to shut down. It forced entire nations to shut down, halting societal activities throughout the globe. When a student emails a professor telling them they are struggling in the middle of a global pandemic, that student deserves to have a professor work with them. Dr. Dudley you failed in every way and at every chance to work with a student fighting to do his all to pass his classes during a global pandemic. I found your eight-minute reply on April 27, 2020 very insulting. If COVID-19 was able to put the entire country of the U.S in a state of emergency, I do not understand how it is hard or “strange” for you to see that it led students to be in emergency mode. You are the only professor I had at Towson who completely failed to work with a student in an emergency.

My very clear appeal is as stated. For Spring 2020, I received a 67.45% grade of D for COSC 418 Ethical and Societal Concerns of Computer Scientists, a class that I set to pass/fail. I do not agree with this grade. It is very clear to me, and to any being who is aware of the events of COVID-19, which was a state emergency, national emergency, and global emergency, that Spring 2020 was completed in a chaotic pandemic that was a national and global emergency. I deserved to have someone work with me, the very way that Towson University extended flexibility with non-standard exceptions to its faculty in Spring 2020 and the same way that the U.S government extended flexibilities with non-standard exceptions to its population. In a state of emergency, the last thing a student needs is a professor that condemns them for experiencing hardships that are direct products of the emergency going on. In my communications with Dr.Dudley, I have voiced my struggles in the midst of COVID-19. In this letter I have referenced the Case Study #1 worth 10% of the class grade. I received a 20% on that assignment. The assignment was posted at 3:30 p.m. on March 11, 2020, the week that Towson shut down its campus early in the face of the arriving COVID-19 pandemic to its campus. The professor sent an email at 2:43 p.m. on March 10, 2020.

“Please read the following announcements and govern yourselves accordingly:

1. Case Study #1 is assigned and will be posted by 3:30 p.m., 3/11 and due on 3/25 by 11:59 p.m.

2. During the online period (3/23), students are to work on and complete Case Study #1.

3. There will be no homework and online assignments posted and/or due until 3/25.

4. The Professor WILL NOT be answering questions regarding Case Study #1 after 3:30 p.m. on 3/11.”

The professor gave a 24-hour window to ask questions about an assignment that was NOT YET posted. Then the professor shut down any opportunity for students to communicate with her during the spring “break” up to the deadline of the assignment. I do not think it is “strange” at all, that I struggled during this time frame and for several weeks later trying to adjust during COVID-19 while completing my semester. Eventually, with advice from a mentor from Loyola, I emailed my professor to reveal my struggles and concerns. My expressed concerns fell on the ears of a professor who showed absolutely no interest or dedication to her job and failed to work with a student during a state of emergency. Every single one of my other professors worked with their classes to adapt as students were battling the realities of the pandemic and the struggle to handle their classes, that is what a professor is meant to do. It is the student’s responsibility to put in the work; however, it is the professor’s responsibility to provide students with the proper tools and assistance. This is what students pay for when they pay Towson University. This is what I pay for and deserve to get when I enroll in a class that I am paying for. This is not just about a grade or about a professor no being nice. It is about demanding what I deserve when I pay the institution of Towson University for my tuition and course enrollment. It is about my money and my life that is affected by the actions of this professor. Dr. Dudley did not fulfill her responsibility of a professor. It is completely unethical to punish a student for struggling during a global pandemic, the current second deadliest pandemic in U.S history. Punishment is the only word that I have for the grade that Dr. Dudley assigned. On April 27, 2020 when Dr.Dudley received my email, there were several ways she could have given me a chance to pass the class. Without bringing up any of the other assignments that I wrote to her about in my emails and just looking at Study Case #1, here are some very valid ways she could have helped. She could have opened the assignment on Blackboard and provided me with 24 hours to submit a completed document. She could have forced me to do a new Case Study using one of the multiple other articles already listed, with the condition that I did not use the article that I already used. She could have dropped the grade and only use my Study Case #2 grade for the total 20% of the Case Studies grade that made up the class. These are just a few possible solutions that I was able to think of while writing this letter. All three solutions would have come at little to no cost for my professor. However, Dr. Dudley received my email and replied within eight minutes, spent zero time thinking of how she could work with a student struggling during a global pandemic. In fact, between reading my email and writing her email in response, it is hard to believe that she even spent 5 minutes thinking about my situation, let alone what she could do. That is what I was given, less than 5 minutes of thought and feigned sympathy. This is wrong. Given the circumstances that I am now in I ask that the Case Study #1 grade of 20%, which makes up 10% of the final grade, gets taken out of my grade calculation. I request that my Case Study #2 grade of a 86% be used to calculate the full 20% of Case Study percent points. In reality, I could argue against the grades of multiple assignments. However, I have no desire to extend this process or my dealings with Dr. Dudley any further than necessary. I expected better than this from the department and from Towson University during the COVID-19 pandemic. I transferred to this institution from Loyola University of Maryland because I thought it was also a University that cared about students and providing students with the tools to succeed. My Ethics professor did not display this in the Spring 2020 semester. My appeal is more than reasonable. I am requesting to get a passing grade of 75 or above to meet my degree program grade requirement for this course.

Dr. Dudley I write this letter begging that you do the ethically just thing and change my grade to a passing grade. Thank you for your time.

Best,

Valentin Mudiay