



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on June 13, 2014

## University Must Pay \$700K Legal Bill for Retaliating Against Christian Prof

A judge has ordered the University of North Carolina-Wilmington to pay over \$700,000 in legal bills incurred by a Christian criminology professor who waged an eight-year battle against the school's campaign of retaliation because of his conservative and religious views.

Earlier this year a jury found that a succession of chairpersons in the university's department of sociology and criminal justice had discriminated against criminology professor Mike Adams after he converted from hardcore atheist to committed conservative Christian. While Adams had received frequent professional accolades from his colleagues, his religious conversion and his conservative political views, which he expressed through a regular nationally syndicated column, didn't play well with the heavily feminist department leadership, which refused to promote him to full professor in 2006, despite Adams' award-winning record of teaching, research, and scholarly publication.

Adams filed a lawsuit against the university with the help of the conservative legal advocacy group [Alliance Defending Freedom](#), and in March a jury [ruled that UNC-Wilmington was indeed guilty of retaliation](#) against Adams over his religious and political views. The next month a federal court ordered the university to grant Adams the promotion to full professor it had denied him eight years earlier, and to provide him the back pay he would have earned during that time.

The financial duress due to the university's unethical behavior became even worse when the court ordered on June 10 that the school foot the \$710,626.50 legal bill Adams incurred in the process of defending himself and his reputation.

"Public universities must respect the free speech rights of their professors, regardless of the points of view they express," said ADF Litigation Staff Counsel Travis Barham, who represented Adams in the case. "Public universities should be a marketplace of ideas, not places where professors like Dr. Adams face years of retaliation and discrimination for expressing views university officials do not like. The court's order reminds universities that disagreeing with an accomplished professor's religious and political views is not grounds for denying him a promotion."

Taken with the \$50,000 in back pay the university was forced to give Adams in April, the judgment





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against the school represents “one of the biggest amounts awarded in the academic freedom context,” said ADF Senior Counsel David Cortman. “It’s a shame the university officials wasted taxpayer money all because they didn’t want to promote a conservative Christian.”

Barham emphasized that the university “could have avoided every single penny of this if they’d initially recognized back in 2006-7 that Dr. Adams was fully qualified for his promotion, and if they’d just treated him fairly like they treat professors of other persuasions and world views.”



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