



California Faculty Association@Long Beach

University Police Incident on Campus Involving CSULB Faculty Member Dr. Steven Osuna

On Wednesday, May 25th, at around 6:00pm Dr. Steven Osuna, associate professor of sociology at California State University, Long Beach, and Executive Board member of the California Faculty Association, was racially profiled and discriminated against by CSULB university police. During the evening of May 25th, Dr. Osuna was in his office preparing for an online advising workshop later that evening for the Sociology Club at Long Beach Community College. The Club had requested an advisor from the CSULB sociology department to speak to them about their courses and campus life at CSULB. Many of these students will be transferring to CSULB in the fall. Dr. Osuna gladly accepted the invitation as a current sociology advisor. This was during his free time, and he did not receive any financial compensation, but he felt it was important to meet the incoming transfer students and make them feel welcomed before they arrived at CSULB.

While preparing, Dr. Osuna walked out of his office to use the restroom. He left his office door unlocked but forgot the hallway doors are locked during the summer. Dr. Osuna walked out of his office without his office keys, any identification, or cell phone. Unfortunately, he was locked out. Dr. Osuna walked to the blue light emergency phone in parking lot E10 to call university police (UPD). He was hesitant to call them since he had already had an intimidating experience with them in the past, but he had no other choice. The workshop was about to begin. Dr. Osuna let the operator know who he was and that he was locked out of his office.

A UPD police officer and a “ride along” plain clothed individual came to see him. Dr. Osuna introduced himself as a faculty member and explained the situation, that he was locked out, had no identification, but he could give them his faculty ID number. The officer then asked Dr. Osuna to contact his dean, telling Dr. Osuna that they always go through the dean first before opening the door. Dr. Osuna replied that he didn’t have his dean’s phone number, but the officer could easily verify who he was by looking at his profile online. Dr. Osuna pleaded to them, again telling them he was a tenured professor on campus, that if they entered the hallway, they would see his office door was unlocked, and the pictures of his family and him in his office. The police officer refused to help, but eventually called their supervisor who supported the officer’s decision that there wasn’t anything they could do. It is notable that during the call to their supervisor, the UPD officer referred to Dr. Osuna as staff, and not as faculty.

Upset by being put into a presumption of guilt, rather than of innocence, Dr. Osuna told the police officer and the plain clothed man that if he were white, they would not have doubted he is a faculty member. To which the plain clothed man smirked, and the police officer said nothing. They said there was nothing they could do and walked away leaving, Dr. Osuna to figure out how to get into his office on his own.

Fortunately, one of Dr. Osuna's colleagues was on their way to campus to also participate in a later part of the workshop. However, Dr. Osuna was over 20 minutes late to his workshop and very distressed. While Dr. Osuna continued with the workshop, he had to apologize to the students and try to explain why he was late. Dr. Osuna's concern was to minimize the negative effect on the potential transfer students for being so late. Dr. Osuna did not want the students to leave with the impression that CSULB faculty are uncaring for students.

Since the experience, Dr. Osuna has shared this story with many white colleagues who have had very different experiences in similar situations; UPD police officers have opened their office doors without first requiring a photo ID or to get their dean's permission. Obviously, there is much discretion in the application of the unlock door policy.

CFA@LB is deeply concerned that Dr. Osuna was subjected to this treatment that can only be described as discrimination and racial profiling while performing his duties as a faculty member on campus. Instead of being able to rely on the campus police for support, Dr. Osuna was forced to fend for himself and rely on his colleagues for help and support. Dr. Osuna's initial hesitation to call police for help was validated in this instance. A stark reminder that police do not serve communities of color, rather police them. This is another example of why there is a growing call for police to be defunded and abolished on university campuses.

In response, CFA@LB stand with Dr. Osuna and support his demands:

- 1) The UPD declare a public apology to Dr. Osuna.
- 2) The UPD, in consultation with CFA@LB, revise the existing unlock policy
- 3) The Academic Senate, in consultation with CFA@LB, develop a CSULB Campus Police Accountability Council ("CPAC") composed of CSULB faculty, staff, students, and members of the Long Beach community, nominated and elected by CSULB faculty, staff, and students.

At a minimum, the CSULB CPAC would serve as an independent entity that receives and reviews incident reports submitted by persons against the UPD or UPD officers, and after review may make recommendations to the CSULB President. Other CPAC responsibilities would be identified through the process of developing the Council.

We believe that forming a CPAC would encourage transparency and accountability of the UPD to the campus community.