

For Immediate Release

Date: May 23, 2024

Contact: Gina Walter, Director of Strategic Marketing

440-423-2997 gwalt@hawken.edu

The following communication was sent out to Hawken families at 4pm EST on 05/23/24.



Dear Hawken Parents and Guardians,

Recently we became aware of social media posts made by one of our faculty members on a personal account regarding the Israel-Hamas war. I want to assure you that the matter is being addressed with seriousness and sensitivity. This morning I accepted the resignation of this faculty member.

I want to emphasize that the views expressed in the social media posts do not represent the views of Hawken. We are committed to providing a safe and inclusive learning environment for all our students, regardless of their cultural, religious, or political affiliations.

Hawken recognizes the importance of fostering an environment where diverse perspectives are welcomed on complex issues and are engaged with civility and empathy. It is equally important that such perspectives be shared with caution, especially for those who work in educational settings. When the extent of this faculty member's social media posts was understood, it called into play, Hawken's social media policies and procedures for employees.

The Hawken Employee Handbook's Social Media Use policy states, *"Hawken asks its employees to properly represent their professional reputation and Hawken School when posting on their personal social media accounts...make sure content, links, photos, etc. are appropriate for a broad audience. Use discretion, minding boundaries between private and personal communication...remember in the public sphere, employees are a trusted agent of the School and represent the School at all times. Your posts and comments online should help to build and support the traditions and values of the school community...be mindful that content you publish will be public for a long time."*

The human suffering as a result of this conflict is a tragedy that elicits sympathy and concern. However, the full extent of these social media posts by a faculty member expressing her opinions on the situation in Gaza has understandably caused distress among members of our community. While we respect the right to freedom of expression, it is imperative for Hawken employees to exercise discretion and sensitivity, particularly when discussing or posting about deeply sensitive issues.

The term "genocide" carries immense weight and historical significance, and its usage in the context of the Israeli-Hamas war is highly contentious and polarizing. The resurgence of antisemitism may be fueled by that assertion, regardless of the intent.

I value the trust that you, as parents and guardians, place in us to provide a quality education and uphold the values of our school community. Please know that I take this trust seriously and am dedicated to addressing this issue with the utmost care and diligence.

Should you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or your child's respective Division Director. Thank you for your continued support and partnership.

Sincerely,



D. Scott Looney
Hawken Head of School

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Founded in 1915, Hawken School is an independent, nonsectarian, coed day school of over 1,600 students, toddler through grade 12, located on two campuses in the eastern suburbs of Cleveland, a campus on Cleveland's west side, and a campus in University Circle, home to the Mastery School of Hawken, which takes Hawken's experiential, problem-based programming to scale in the heart of Cleveland. A nationally recognized leader in innovative programming, Hawken prepares students to meet the challenges of tomorrow's world.