

Dear members of the Pine View community,

I am the AP Calculus BC and Differential Equations instructor here at Pine View. I would like to share some information that has not been reported, and correct some misinformation, about the recent decision by SCF to change the method of administration of dual enrollment courses on our campus.

In 2015 and prior years, the Differential Equations final exam was written by the Pine View instructor, who sent it to SCF for approval. My predecessor stated that the approval was the merest of formalities; typically, there was no response at all. In 2016, my first year teaching the course, I had my exam approved by the SCF Venice department chair, as required in the articulation agreement. So, up through 2016, Pine View students were taught by an instructor who had full latitude for the entire semester to instruct students in such a manner that they would be well prepared for the final assessment. Pine View students excelled.

In 2017, I was informed mid-semester that, while the SCF campus instructors would continue to write their own exams, I would instead be provided with one. I was provided with no information on how best to instruct students beyond what was available to the general public on the SCF website. That semester, while the students on SCF campuses had the advantage of being taught by instructors who would write the final exam, I prepared my students using only the publicly posted list of learning outcomes. The exam assessed only some of those outcomes. In addition, a few students had, for individual reasons, fallen off track in the class, and were unprepared for any test. It was therefore no surprise that the 2017 grades were lower than 2016.

In a letter to the Sarasota County Schools superintendent, the SCF president stated that in 2017, the final exam was delivered on the day of the administration. That is false. The exam was delivered the week prior. I do not know why it was stated otherwise.

I am distressed by the insinuation that I (in 2016) and my predecessor acted improperly to inflate grades. I am proud of the students who earned their grades and whose integrity should not be questioned. I am also proud of my own reputation. My students have performed well above national and state averages, earning a mean above 4.5 on a 5-point scale, with over two-thirds of students receiving a 5. Due to the excellent performance of my students, I have found invigorating work training AP teachers in Florida and leading study sessions for AP students around the country. Additionally, I am proud of Pine View's tradition of excellence and it is upsetting that the reputation of the school itself is being challenged.

Meeting the needs of gifted kids is our mission. I look forward to the opportunity to design a post-AP course specifically around the needs of our Gifted students. I have two great models here at Pine View: Ms. Keiper-Wilson and Dr. Skipper, who have

designed Honors-level post-AP courses in Biotechnology and Organic Chemistry, respectively. I will soon have a third: Mr. Mattia, who will debut his post-AP, Honors-level Statistics 2 course. I'll focus on Dr. Skipper's class, the most long-standing of the three and one I am quite familiar with.

Year after year, Dr. Skipper provides his students with student-centered learning of challenging, interesting concepts in a low-pressure, collaborative environment. Year after year, I am amazed at the number of seniors who plan to major in Chemistry or a related field. I spoke with Dr. Skipper about his philosophy for the class. He said that he has never attempted to replicate the first-year university course. Rather, his goal has always been to inspire future chemists. He explained that he considered the topics typically taught in a university course and narrowed it down to a subset of topics that he felt would be most engaging. He then went to work designing a curriculum that dug deep into those topics. The result has been what I see as the best course at Pine View, one that is rigorous, inspiring, challenging, and fun.

Students in my new course will, in addition to traditional exams, apply the concepts taught in lecture to problems of a length and complexity that defy 50-minute assessments. They will present solutions professionally in both oral and written forms using technology. They will do this in a collaborative and low-pressure environment. As the course concludes, rather than preparing for (and fretting over) an exam which will impact their college GPA, they'll be putting their finishing touches on a final project of their choosing in which they can showcase what they've learned. Then, when they enroll in the courses in college, they'll be on the fast track to the top of the class.

On a personal note, I have thought back to my high-school math experience at Pine View under the instruction of Ms. Myers, who I now count as a mentor. After AP Calculus BC, we studied Multivariable Calculus and Differential Equations at the Honors level. Those experiences of grappling with challenging concepts in a low-stress environment were central to my decision to enter my profession, one of the best decisions I have ever made. I am eager to apply my expertise in Gifted education to design the most engaging learning experience I can provide.

I will cherish this last week with the class of 2018, many of whom I have gotten to know over two years. The following week, my remaining students and I will share the giddy anticipation of summer vacation. I am grateful for having been able to get to know these lovely young people and for all the support I have received from the Pine View community. Thank you.

David Nezelek