

Virtual Threat Assessment Transcript

Dusty Harrington Case, October 2025

Michael: My name's Michael, my colleagues and I –

Dusty: Hi, Michael, I'm Dusty, nice to meet you, pleasure.

Michael: Nice to meet you, Dusty. I'll have my colleagues introduce themselves as well, before we get started.

Wendi: Hi, Dusty, I'm Wendi, I'm the Executive Director for our CARE team. It's really nice to meet you today.

Dusty: Wendi, yes. Hi, Wendi, nice to meet you, pleasure. I'm Dusty. As I'm sure you know what's going on, so I'm here.

Kacie: Hi, Dusty, I'm Kacie. I work with the CARE team here. Nice to meet you.

Dusty: Hi Kacie. Pleasure.

Jaritza: Hey there! And I'm Jaritza. I'm also on the CARE team here.

Dusty: Jaritza, nice to meet you. I should be fading out like there's some sort of... this is a real background, it's not fake, trust me, but I'm, like, losing half of my face over here for some reason, I'm not too sure what's going on with that. So, anyway, yes, continue.

Michael: So thank you for joining us today. I asked my colleagues to be a part of this, just in case there's any additional supports, that they might think you would benefit from. Would you prefer I call you Dusty?

Dusty: Oh, Dusty's fine. My students call me Dusty. I'm not going to stand by academic, you know, formality in a situation like this, so please, yes. No, my colleagues and my students all call me Dusty, so that is perfectly fine. If I ask you to call me doctor, then there's a conversation going on that we need to... if somebody needs to start throwing their credentials on the table, there's kind of a bit of a problem going on.

Michael: Great, thank you so much. So we asked you to come in today just to discuss if there's any kind of struggles or concerns going on that you may be facing at the university that we may offer some additional supports for or guidance. So over the last few months, do you feel like you've been having any sort of struggles at the university, or any concerns with your lectures, your classes?

Dusty: The fact that I'm being told I have to meet with you. I appreciate the fact that you're reframing it in a way that this is an optional, that you're here to offer me support. Thank you very much, Michael. But no, no, I believe I'm being censored, and people do not like how I express myself in the classroom, and I am being told I need to meet with your team before they will let me back in, so yes.

Michael: So, Dusty, what type of things have you been lecturing on or trying to lecture on that you feel you're being censored with? Like, what are you trying to get across to your students or your colleagues that you feel is being restricted?

Dusty: I believe that talking about current political events going on in the Middle East is causing a lot of uncomfortable feelings with the administration, and their fear and their desire to lick boots is overcoming their desire for academic freedom, which I believe censorship in an academic environment in any form should be frowned upon, and the fact that my colleagues, perhaps, are expressing and willing to crawl under tables in the middle of what... of an earthquake, as opposed to, letting other people know what's going on, is a huge problem. And... I think that's why I'm here.

Michael: What type of things in the Middle East have you been concerned about, or you've been trying to educate your colleagues and...

Dusty: The genocide in Gaza. I think that's pretty evident about what's going on over there. Deaths of millions, and growing every day. And also, this administration's desire to censor us if we say anything that doesn't agree with them, to deport doctoral students, that... that... are here to learn, and... and I think that.. Yeah, I think that's what's going on, and that expression. They don't like how I teach, but I've been teaching that same way for a long time, and the fact that they're now uncomfortable with my teaching techniques when the only thing that has changed is the message and addressing current events. That's the problem.

Wendi: Dusty, I'm gonna jump in, too, for a second, Michael, if you don't mind. It sounds like you're extremely passionate about the work that you do, and I can hear that in what you're saying.

Dusty: Yes, thank you.

Wendi: No, absolutely. Can you just tell us a little bit about, I guess, what you were hoping your students were going to get out of your lectures recently?

Dusty: I... I think if you've... Look, or ask to look at my classroom reviews, I think you'll see that I expand the horizons. I'm not here to teach some middle schooler how to write. I'm here to help teach them how to think, how to broaden that horizon, how to not just, you know, go and look at the ocean, but that pond that they're in right now. Not to make it shallow, but to dig deeper into it, to dig deeper into those thoughts, to make greater depth into that and expand their horizons by teaching them to go deeper into the thought process of what's going on and why they're making the decisions and the morality that goes into it. And how they express themselves, and what actions they're willing to take in order to defend that thought for expression.

Michael: And, Dusty, how do you... like, what techniques do you use in your classroom, or how do you try to present this information to your students to show how important you feel it is, or how they should be trying to look for these truths, as you say?

Dusty: I mean, it's a lecture classroom, in terms of what do you mean by how do I... can you explain that a little bit farther? I mean, it's a classroom, it's a lecture, it's... I mean... Socratic, I mean, I... are you looking for my educational philosophy? It's been a long time since I've written one of those, but I'm sure I can... I can... I can pen one up if... if I need... if I've given a little bit

of time in terms of talking about how I actually approach my, you know, my pedagogy. It's... it's... I've been in the classroom for a long time. I have been teaching for more than 25 years. Since I got my doctorate, and... Yeah, yeah, I've been... yeah, I've been teaching for a long time. My method of teaching has not changed. I think people are just uncomfortable with what I have to say.

Michael: Right, and what... what have you said that you feel like you have gotten pushback on? Like, what you said, like, you feel like they're licking the boots? Like, whose boots do you feel like they're licking? And how have people approached you about your lectures that you feel like there is this pushback?

Dusty: They haven't approached me. I've heard all this secondhand. The first real approaching that I got was... again, I've been trying to reach out to my colleagues, asking them about publishing things that will actually speak up and change the world, and perhaps... but of course, it's publish or perish, but apparently they're choosing perish, because they're choosing to duck their heads while other people perish. And so they're choosing not to express themselves and not to share their ideas with the world. That will actually help change the world and help motivate people towards changing and help those students to express themselves. And so, that is part of the problem. I'm sharing emails, I'm emailing my other professors, I'm leaving voicemails, I've asked them to collaborate with me on various reports, on various papers, and they're like, oh. They avoid me. And they're not responding, and so then I have to leave them a second voicemail. And I'm still not getting any responses.

And that's part of the problem, is they're... they're licking the boots of our administration. And our administration is licking the boots and trying to just duck their head for 4 years to make sure that they're not the next target. And so they're... they don't want to hear what I have to say. Because I disagree with that, and they just think I should be quiet and not express myself emotionally in the classroom, perhaps, and not talk to them about what I feel. Or not to feel anything. I mean, if somebody wants to listen to an audiobook, go ahead, listen to an audiobook. That's not going to class. That's not having questions asked of you. That's not having things presented in front of you. That's... That's just sitting back and not hearing. Not participating. It's not just listening, it's participating in the educational process.

Kacie: And that's what people sometimes don't like to hear.

Michael: With you trying to create all this research, or these articles, and not hearing back, that sounds very lonely. How have you been, kind of...

Dusty: It's not lonely, it's academic... academic cowards. I'm not lonely.

Michael: Okay.

Dusty: I'm not lonely in my career. I've been here for a long time, I'm tenured. I'm not having feelings of loneliness here. I'm having feelings of frustration at the cowardice around me, and their unwillingness to... To do what's right morally and ethically. And I believe within the academic world, morals and ethics are a real thing. Just like death and dying and the things that are going on in other parts of the world are real. And I believe that's being ignored, and instead, they're trying to silence me for letting people know what's going on out there.

Kacie: Dustin, I'm just wondering if I can ask a question.

Dusty: Oh, yeah, yes, Kacie, right? Yes.

Kacie: Yes, it's Kacie. Yes. Thank you for sharing with us. And I'm just kind of wondering, from your perspective. You mentioned censorship and, the support, or not feeling as supported by your colleagues. And so, can you give us an understanding of what that would look like for you to have that support, or to have that collaboration? What it is that you're kind of looking for, and what that would feel and look like for you?

Dusty: Help change the world. To get... to get published date, if you're talking about ideals, you know, not worrying about publishers rejecting what you have to say, or not worrying about what... Publishing companies are going to be willing to publish your next book, because they're afraid of the message, because they're afraid of being targeted by the administrations. And... having support... having more than one author on a book gets greater visibility. If you have two sets of reputations, and I'm not trying to bring up the reputation of a doctoral student in order so that they can publish themselves, and they can co-write, etc. But I'm talking about actually doing real work and having my name on something, as well as a fellow willing to partner with me.

My name has a lot of weight, and I also believe that if my colleagues could have a little bit more courage, they might actually be able to put their weight behind a message as well. But they don't want to. So, in the ideal world, they would publish with me our messages would get out there, we'd be invited on various programs, we'd be able to speak about what's going on, and I... as opposed to being silenced and just kind of brushed off. And instead, I'm sitting here with you, having a conversation to... to... to, again, censor myself so I can hold myself together, or to see whether you can judge me appropriately to get back into the classroom.

Kacie: Well, it sounds like you really want to be heard in your convictions, and the things that you believe in, and what you want other people to know and hear. What are some of the things... I mean, have you done this before in the past, where you've had colleagues collaborate with you, and I'm wondering, kind of, where the change maybe shifted, where you're feeling that you don't have that much support that you used to have.

Dusty: Alright, I guess I have... I have published before. Published with colleagues, absolutely. So, where the change is, is what's going on in the world, not with what I am saying... not with how I express myself, not with what I'm... or not with how I'm saying, but with what I'm saying. I think that people are uncomfortable with what's going on in the world right now, and they would prefer to ignore the world, hoping that it goes away. And that's not how the world works. The world will come to your front door.

If you don't speak up, you're one of the people that sticks your head in the sand and does not speak. That's not how you change the world. That's not how action takes place. And the people who are not listening right now aren't hearing the... they're... yeah, so that's what's going on. Have I published with these people? Absolutely. I have very cordial relationships. I mean, there are academic differences, obviously, in terms of how we express ourselves and our ideas. That is expected in academia.

But in terms of this sort of silence that I get when I'm sent... when I send out emails, when I leave voicemails, the silence that I get, and then hearing messages that students are reporting me to the administration here, to the college administration, and are saying that, you know. I feel like one of those signs in a public park now, that is saying something controversial. So the park service is being told to take them down. I feel like I am one of those signs, and somebody is trying to take me down because they don't like the uncomfortable message that they're reading up there. But growing intellectually takes time. It takes living with those uncomfortable feelings. Living with the things that they don't want to hear, and perhaps listening to that. So that's what's making them uncomfortable right now.

Kacie: Yeah.

Wendi: Dusty, I can appreciate it. Sounds like, as a faculty member, you really try to be thought-provoking for your students, right? And I think as faculty, we want to do that, right?

Dusty: Absolutely, Wendi.

Wendi: But I'm just wondering, I guess, a little bit about, you know, you said that some of the students, I guess, were uncomfortable, I'm going to use that word loosely. So how do you interpret that feedback that maybe some people are finding the stuff that you're lecturing on thought-provoking, but maybe it's making some other people uncomfortable? How would you interpret that feedback?

Dusty: Suck it up, buttercup. I'm sorry to phrase it like that, excuse my... excuse my academic French. I... I... Yes, the world's an uncomfortable place to live in. Perhaps the... Perhaps the classroom should be a little bit more uncomfortable to hear things. Everybody wants to be, to be victimized. Everybody wants to, to, to, to, oh, you're saying something that's triggering me in the classroom. This makes me feel uncomfortable hearing the word genocide.

Oh my goodness! You're upset about what's going on in the world, but you don't want to hear the words that are actually... of the descriptions of what's actually occurring? You don't want to see pictures of things that are occurring, of children starving, of hospitals being blown up. You don't want to see that. Oh, that's uncomfortable. I'm making them uncomfortable by showing them what's going on. These are people hiding themselves, who are literally just ignoring the newspaper, hoping it will go away. Ignoring social media. Because they don't like it. And they had their feelings hurt this past election. You know what? I had my feelings hurt too, but you know what? I'm showing up in the classroom to make a difference, and I believe that students that are going to college want to make a difference, and they need to broaden their horizons and feel a little uncomfortable in the classroom.

Michael: So, Dusty, you mentioned how you've been feeling uncomfortable too, or your feelings have been hurt too. What has been going on recently?

Dusty: My feelings have not been hurt, Michael. My feelings are not at stake, my academic freedom is.

Michael: Okay.

Dusty: That's what is being hurt right now, and that is where my feelings are. Just like my feelings are for what's going on in the world, I have feelings about people trying to censor me in the classroom, and to make me come to this.

Michael: You're clearly very... you're clearly very passionate about what you teach, and I'm sure that comes across in the classroom.

Dusty: Everybody is clear of my passion, yes. I... I... I am quite passionate, as... as I believe at least three of you have stated today. I... I do recognize that. I... and... and... I love how people say passion... While... while biting their lips sometimes. And... and academic freedom They, they say... And they don't mean it. And so, we see you're passionate, you're scaring people. What have I done to scare people? What have I done? Yes, yes, I've read some of the comments in some of the online forums, but I've also read my yearly reviews every year by students who tell me that I'm thought-provoking, that I'm their favorite teacher, because I force them to think. And that's what I'm here for.

So, they shove me into this position. Now, because I'm... of all the things that they've complimented for years, suddenly, now I'm saying things a little too provocative and too provocative of a way in order to actually help people understand.

Michael: What would be an example of something that they are claiming is too provocative? Like, what's something that you've presented in your class?

Dusty: I've been very descriptive about it, just saying, you know, students saying that I yell too much in class, that I talk about things that are uncomfortable. What was one of the other ones?

I talked about razors. I made an analogy between razors and modern technology and disposable Bicks and old-school razors in order to actually, you know, something substantial, talking about how the world is disposable nowadays. I think there was something online about... I don't know, you might know more about it than I do, saying, oh, I've talked about my ex-wife online, or in class, and they don't like hearing about that. Oh my goodness!

Oh, oh, I've talked about... I've talked about implements of... of functional beauty and art, and how they're used in comparison to where the world is today, and how it is disposable, like the thoughts of the kids that are going on right now, that just want to be spoon-fed all of this. And I've talked about the real life of other people, and compared it to what's going on. And, and how... Again.

Yeah, you've read the notes. You've seen, correct? Have you read the emails that I'm sure that they've stacked up against me? Well, could you give... you mentioned the metaphor of the razors. How did... like, what was the metaphor exactly, do you feel? I don't know, read my class notes, it's... somebody said they recorded me. Somebody said they recorded me, and if you've read that recording.

Or if you've listened to the recording, which is wonderful. Students ask for permission to record what I have to say, but the reason why, because they're like, oh, we want to take notes afterwards. So I'm like, yes, absolutely, academic freedom. I'm not afraid of what I'm saying in the classroom. You can record what I have to say, because what I'm saying needs to be heard. So if you want to record that, that's absolutely true. But then you go and say, I'm uncomfortable

with what he's saying? Oh, I'm gonna report this to the administration because he's saying something uncomfortable. So what did they hear? What did they hear that I said?

I don't know, I didn't record my own lecture. I know what I read online that people said. But I also know what I read in my yearly reviews. So I'm hearing it from one side of the mouth, one other side of the mouth. And it's... they're talking it up two sides, saying that, oh, Dusty, you're wonderful for our college. You're making children think. And, oh, Dusty, shut up and stop being so emotional in class.

Kacie: So it sounds to me, from what you're saying, it sounds like you're getting a lot of this dichotomy, right, of two different perspectives of your...

Dusty: Be quiet for 4 years Dr. Harrington. Because we don't know when we're gonna be the next focus. So what did you say before? I know that that's what they're saying. I hear them saying it. I can feel that that is what they are saying. And I know that that's what they're saying by ignoring my emails, ignoring my calls. And sending me to this interview.

Kacie: So, the feedback is not direct, it hasn't been told to you, but your perception of what those, the silence and the non-response hasn't... is that?

Dusty: Correct, Kacie, absolutely, yes, that's... it's, yes, it's... It's frustrating. I'm... I'm... I'm shouting into the void in a lot of ways. And... and... I'm not trying to shout it to the void. I'm trying to shout into the ears of the youth that need to change the future.

Kacie: Okay.

Dusty: And instead, it's the void of academia that is eating what I am saying and trying to silence me and pull me into the void. And I am not going to go silently into the void.

Kacie: What happens if you feel... I mean, is there a plan if you continue to feel that you're not being supported? Is there a sense of what you would do, or how you would go about, you know, kind of...

Dusty: I'm going to publish. I'm going to publish. What do you mean by how would I do what? What are you asking?

Kacie: If you don't... if you continue to not feel supported by your administration, or the students in your classroom, that you don't have this...

Dusty: I am very confident in my position here. And... and in the ways that academic freedom needs to be supported. So... So... Are we... are we... are we beating around a burning bush here or something? What... what are we doing here, in terms of asking about this? Are you saying...

Kacie: Well, no, so what I'm asking...

Dusty: Do something violent against the administration? No!

Kacie: No, what I'm asking, is there a plan that if you... because you've spoken about not having academic freedom.

Dusty: Yes.

Kacie: But feeling confident that you do have academic freedom. So where... what is the plan if you can –

Dusty: I believe there should be... I'm sorry, Kacie, I apologize for interrupting you. Say your question? I'm not sure I...

Kacie: So what is the plan if you continue to feel the way that you feel now? If you're not feeling heard, you're not feeling supported by your administration. Or you're feeling censored, you know, what...

Dusty: Support me, I need to get the message out. I'm not here in terms of having a plan to lick their boots like they're licking the boots of everybody else that's gonna cower. and hide from the real world that's going on. So my plan is to continue to speak how I want to speak, and to talk how I've been talking for the past 25 years, in order to inspire people to listen, and to speak up for themselves, and to find that voice within themselves in order to actually get out there.

Wendi: I have a question. I know for you, you know, you've expressed it a couple of times, and I thank you again for sitting with us, because I know that sometimes this can be a little bit uncomfortable, right? But I guess my question is, with everything that's going on for you, you know, you're hearing things from your, you know, your colleagues, and students are saying stuff, how do you kind of decompress from this? Like, how do you deal with all of this? Because I always care about, like, the person, and I'm wondering, like, what it's like for you.

Dusty: What do I do for fun outside of school? I... I write in order to publish. I process my ideas. I... I prepare for class. I grade papers. What do I do for me? I... I lived the life of a full-time professor.

Wendi: That's... that's what I do for me. Yeah.

Dusty: I... I've asked some of my colleagues to go out for a drink with me, and they choose not to. And they don't even respond nowadays, nor do they even have conversations about... about things that we could do together for publishing. And they don't even want to listen to me, they don't respond to me.

Wendi: So what do I do for fun? I try to go out and relax.

Dusty: If they don't go with me, I go out and relax. But my relaxation is the teaching as well. But yes, I go out and I... Yes, like everybody else, I go out and have an adult beverage every now and then, and I try to invite people to come out with me to do that. And... I've been... I am the albatross around this... around the neck of this college that they're trying to get rid of. And... I wonder the curse that will follow them if they get rid of the albat... if they kill the albatross.

Wendi: So you're saying, you know, you might go... you might go out, you know, by yourself, that your colleagues won't go out. Do you have other people in your life who maybe you go out with as well?

Dusty: Huh? Not currently. I'm not currently seeing anybody.

Wendi: Okay.

Dusty: I mean... It... not at the moment. My word... my word... My world is... teaching is academia. So, I mean, friends? I mean... My parents are deceased, I don't have any siblings, I was an only child. I am currently divorced, and... Yeah, currently there... I don't have very many friends. I used to socialize a lot with my colleagues. Like typical academia, it's the... it's the dinner parties, it's the... it's going out for drinks to talk and collaborate, and currently, I'm the pariah. And... and currently, I am being ostracized, and I'm okay with that. I don't care.

What I care about is being in the classroom. And being told, I can't be in the classroom. That's what I care about currently. So... I don't need... outside... Friends, or entertainment. I care about what's going on in the world, and I think the more time you distract yourself from that, the less you are actually learning, the less you are experiencing, the less you are communicating that with other people.

So, when do I have time to... to go hang out with my friends? I'm not a college student going out to... to... to Keggers, or going out to the bars, in order to party during finals. No, I'm sitting there grading. I'm... I'm doing that, so no, that's... that's not... I'm not the most social of creatures outside of my job, and when I am social, it was with people that I worked with, yes.

Wendi: And I thank you for sharing, because I do think it gives a little bit of insight, you know, as far as how we all kind of decompress, you know, throughout our day. I know that you said that, you know, you've had, you know, your parents passed, you know, there was a divorce. Has there been anything within the last year that's changed for you?

Dusty: No, my parents died about... My mother died about... 4 years ago, 5 years ago, and my father died within the past 2 years.

Wendi: I'm really sorry to hear that.

Dusty: It's okay, you weren't responsible. It's a stage of life that you need to go through, and I believe going through those stages of life is important for growth. Going... being uncomfortable leads you towards growth. People don't like being uncomfortable.

Wendi: And, you know, I... I can really understand that. And I know you had mentioned, and we kind of, like, skipped over it, right? Like, we're gonna talk about the uncomfortable today, right? Like, as you said, sometimes we gotta go through that. I know you had mentioned a divorce, and I know that you said in the beginning of our conversation that people were uncomfortable that you mentioned your ex-wife in the classroom. Did that divorce happen within the last year?

Dusty: No, 5 years ago.

Wendi: And what was that divorce like for you?

Dusty: I'm sorry, is this a therapy session? I'm not here to really process my divorce or my feelings about my ex-wife. She's a bitch. We had a very passionate relationship, and she... Perhaps didn't like things about me. And, yeah, so, I mean... I'm human. You... you... there are divorces. 50% of the population understands what I went through. I don't know if any of you do. There's 4 of you, I don't know whether 2 out of 10, you know, 2 out of 4 have experienced this before, but... You will. So, it's not a pleasant feeling, adversity. It... it... It is what it is.

Kacie: So, Dusty, what are some indications from others that you are feeling, you know, that... You're getting a pleasant feeling from them, or that you're in a good relationship, or...that you feel supported by other people.

Dusty: If you want to know how you can make me feel better, you can go back to the administration and say that I'm perfectly fine to get back into the classroom. That will give me lots of pleasant feelings, Kacie.

Kacie: Have you spoken with administration directly at all? Has anybody...

Dusty: No, they don't want to schedule a meeting with me. They don't, they're like, oh, you need to talk to... to the team. And I'm like, no, I want to schedule a meeting. And when I try to schedule a meeting, I'm like, oh, the president isn't in right now, I'm sorry. Oh, the head of the department says, oh, we're waiting to hear back before, what's going on. And then I receive an email, oh, they responded to an email, isn't that wonderful? Telling you that I have this meeting set up, so that you can evaluate me? I get evaluated every year. I... I have tenure. I am very confident in my position at this point. Yes, so... so that's the communication that I'm getting – stonewalled. Yes, that is the communication I'm getting.

Kacie: And, you know, I know we kind of touched on it before, but... You know, it seems like you want to get back in the classroom and kind of continue to...

Dusty: Inspire the youth of today. Yes, I believe... Inspire the youth of today. Write appropriately in your evaluation, in order to phrase my... Well, what does that look like for you? My passionate desire.

Kacie: What does the change look like for you? What does the change look like for you?

Dusty: Let me back in the classroom. Let me teach.

Kacie: How is that different from what you have been doing?

Dusty: What I have been doing is teaching. I believe that you need to change the world, so... so... do that one student at a time. So what I have been doing is teaching, and what I want to do is teach. So how does that change? They... they let me teach. That's the change. The change is, they stop stifling my message to the students in the way I communicate, and the way I have been communicating. And they stopped telling me that I can't share that.

I would love, if you're talking about an ideal world, being able to collaborate with my colleagues, being willing to get them to publish with me.

Kacie: Okay.

Dusty: They don't want to, but I'm okay, they're cowards.

Kacie: And you know that they don't want to, how?

Dusty: They ignore me, they don't respond to me. They're... they're probably responsible for the reason why I'm talking to you right now.

Kacie: Okay.

Dusty: So, so what are they? They're a bunch of bootlickers who don't... want... who want to duck their heads, and I am not that way.

Kacie: I wonder what you think their concerns are. You know, from your perspective, what's your...

Dusty: Well, they don't share those emails with me. They... they... nobody tells me... nobody actually responds. What are their concerns? I send them an email asking them if they want to go out for a drink in order to actually have a conversation about this material. And then I don't hear back. And I reach out again, thinking that perhaps one of them will be willing to connect and have a conversation about it, and to actually... somebody might be feeling the same way as me, and they just... Nothing. No response, no email, no phone?

Kacie: So who do you hear, heard, and understood by?

Dusty: The students, perhaps, the ones who give me yearly reviews that rave about me, how they're... they're... I'm their most inspiring teacher.

Kacie: How did they show that you got to you in the classroom?

Dusty: Well, I'm sorry?

Kacie: How do they show that to you in the classroom?

Dusty: They... Do well on their tests. They express their ideas. How do they show that? They do well. They do well on their tests, on their papers, they submit things on time. I'm not a complicated teacher. I'm really not.

Kacie: How... how... how do they... how do they show that they're listening? How do they show that they are connecting with you and supporting...

Dusty: Look it... if you look at the ones who get A's, they were the ones that were listening to what I had to say. The ones that get... the ones that fail, who don't show up, who get C's and D's, those are the ones that aren't doing a good job. It's a pretty simple system, to be honest with you, to understand which ones are doing a good job and actually doing an excellent job.

Kacie: But that's different from... from students that could be supportive, right? And maybe not every student is going to get an A that is supportive of you, so I'm wondering from your perspective...

Dusty: I'm not here to ask the students to support me. I'm... I'm not here for their... I'm not here for their validation. I'm here... hold on, hold on, hold on, Kacie. You asked the question, let me answer. I'm not here to be validated by the students. I'm here to share, perhaps, uncomfortable things with them, and to push their horizons a little farther, and to help them dig out that pond and dig the mud out of their brains. I'm not here to get emotionally supported by the students. They are not my counselors. They are the students. I am the teacher.

Kacie: Correct.

Dusty: I don't believe in crossing those boundaries in that way, in order to ask them for emotional support. Perhaps I overshared, and maybe I shouldn't overshare in the class, but I think perhaps

hearing what the real world is like for both a divorced man and all of the things that go along with that, but I'm not even oversharing about that. Nobody shared the recording with me on that, in terms that they're complaining about.

But at the same time, but yes, I'll stop sharing my personal life with them, but I think they need to hear uncomfortable things. And a lot of their mommies and daddies are probably divorced, too. So, so, oh no, 50% of the class doesn't like hearing what an uncomfortable home life is like.

Anyway, continue, Kacie, I'm sorry.

Kacie: That's okay. I was just trying to understand, you know, your, Your response to, you know, you're recognizing that you are doing good by getting good reviews at the end of your courses, and when your students are doing well. But trying to understand where you're feeling that you are heard and understood, and what that looks like, maybe inside and outside the classroom, so that there can be some sense of returning to do what you love to do in a way that is, collaborative and... Supportive.

Dusty: Emails, if they wish to collaborate with me. Be a professional. Send me a reply, let me know you... Let me know that I am not shouting into the void. In reply, be a collaborative professional academic. So, so how can they support me?

Kacie: Yeah.

Dusty: By... by not... By not tattling on me to the administration for something that they haven't talked to me about.

Like, what is that? What is that? Now we're in a fascist state, where everybody's whispering behind each other's backs to tell, oh my god, so-and-so is saying something about Israel and Hamas, and somebody's talking about Gaza.

Oh, it's getting really uncomfortable, we didn't tell the administration, we're not gonna say anything to him back to tell him that we're uncomfortable with us. No, they go to the administration, they go to somebody else. Are they sending something to the government? I have no idea, and I don't care. I'm not gonna shy away from what I have to say.

Kacie: Alright.

Wendi: I have a question. Oh, sorry, Kacie.

Kacie: No, that's okay, go ahead, Wendi.

Wendi: I'm so sorry. You know, higher education is wonderful as far as we like to have these discussions, and we can have these, you know, debates in classrooms. You know, I guess my question for you is, you're... you know, you've said that your colleagues have not come to you with how they're feeling. So, my question for you is, would you have wanted them to, and what... what do you want to know from it?

Dusty: I would like it emailed back, a reply of some sort, not just being ignored. What would I want them to do? You've asked that already. What I would love to do is for... to... to publish with them, but you know what? If you're not going to reply back and say that.

Wendi: Yeah. How would you have responded, I guess, if they did go to you and they said, you know what, I do not want to, you know, do this with you, you know.

Dusty: All of a bunch of talents!

Wendi: Okay, how do you think...

Dusty: Oh, oh, yes, they don't want to hear the truth either, but that's okay.

Wendi: Yeah. I think, you know, you've been teaching how many years did you say?

Dusty: Over 25, since.

Wendi: 25. So, before that, you'd teach as...

Dusty: As a doctoral student, that's where you get your first experience teaching, for the most part, depending on what your degree is in. But yeah, I've been teaching for more than 25 years.

Wendi: Yeah, so you've been teaching a very long time, so you know what it's like to have discussions in a classroom, so I guess my question is, talking with your colleagues, if you had said to them, you know, exactly what you had just said to me, which calling them cowards, how do you think they would respond to that, instead of having, I guess, a discussion with them?

Dusty: I wouldn't know, because they're not even replying to me. They're avoiding me in the hallway. They're not saying anything to me. So, so, how can I imagine they would respond?

Oh, look! I'm in a review right now! I'm talking to a bunch of counselors over Zoom in order to get back into the classroom. Nothing cowardly about reporting your colleague.

So, how do I think they would respond? I don't care. I don't care how they would respond, because you know what? They apparently don't care about my response enough in order to reply to me. They want to leave me hanging! They wanna leave me out there! They're not going to respond to me. Why should I care about what they have to... how they feel about me calling them a call? But if they don't respond to me. That's even worse!

Wendi: Sure.

Dusty: That, that, that is, that, that is... just... Unprofessional! Cowardice. It's sad. It is really sad.

Wendi: And I could hear it in your voice when you're saying that.

Dusty: That people don't have the courage to speak up for what they believe in. And I do, and I'm being punished.

Michael: So, Dusty, what if administration did come directly to you? Like, if they... like you said, a part of it, of the annoyance or frustration is talking to us, and the lack of response to your emails and your outreach. So, what if administration did meet with you in regards to, like you said, maybe you did overshare, or if they wanted to discuss, how you do run your lectures, like, what... how would you respond to that? Like, what would you want to tell them?

Dusty: Look at the numbers. Look at what the other students say. Yes, yes, you have one or two complaints. Why are they changing about... why are they altering how their approval of my approach in the classroom now? That would be the question I have for them. Why are they now speaking up about me, and telling me I need to change things.

Oh, because they don't like what I'm saying, not necessarily how I'm saying it. But they're hiding behind a lot of things. I've always inspired youth, inspired students through my approach.

I would tell them, look at my classroom reviews on the past 25, however long I've been teaching here. Look at them all! They're excellent! I don't know what it was. It was, like, in the top 25% of professors here last year? In terms of my classroom reviews?

I don't know, I don't... I... It's like dropping your credentials. You're like, oh, I'm this good, call me Dr. Harrington. No, that's ridiculous. My students call me Dusty. I'm like, the professors should call me Dusty, too. I should be able to address them. I'm not gonna call them Dr. So-and-so, I think that's ridiculous. But anyway, talking about what... how would I feel about this, I would feel that they'd need to be heard... they need to hear what I have to say as well. But instead, I don't talk to them. I don't get a response from them other than... "We're hearing complaints from you, Doctor... about you, Dr. Harrington. You need to meet with this... with this group on Zoom today. In order to get back into the classroom, you're not allowed because people are feeling uncomfortable." Details? No. Anyway.

Michael: But what... so, like, for argument's sake, so they... say they did meet with you, and they said that the.

Dusty: Are we not arguing enough, for argument's sake? It... it... where...

Michael: Again, like Wendi had said, like, this is a good part of academia, like, being able to discuss these things. So say they did actually meet with you, right? And they did not bring up Gaza. Gaza had nothing to do with it. It was just more so adjusting in philosophy of how to, like, present to certain students. Like Kacie had mentioned, maybe some students are struggling. So if it was just simply about technique, or how to approach certain topics.

Dusty: 25 years of teaching, and somebody wants to tell me how to approach things and how to change my teaching technique?

I haven't changed. I... I... nothing has changed other than what's going on in the world, and how people are ignoring that. In terms of changing my approach to the students, I'm provocative. They need to hear what's uncomfortable. If they want an audiobook, they can listen to an audiobook that won't yell or gesture in front of them. That then they can listen to something soft, they can listen... I think there's some apps on Calm, or other things that they can listen to that'll make them feel really nice and give them bedtime stories that won't broaden their horizons and make them listen to what's actually going on in the world. That's what I would tell them.

I am not that type of teacher. I have never been that type of teacher, Michael, and I will never be that type of teacher. So they really need to adjust to that.

Michael: Okay. Besides the change in the Middle East, of course, has there been any, like, internal changes at the university that you feel have impacted you? Besides this feeling of

censorship in regards to talking about Gaza, anything more internal at the university? Any changes that you feel have impacted you?

Dusty: Politics that goes on. I try to... if you want to talk about ducking your head, is I want to avoid academic politics, and look where I am right now. I want to avoid academic politics, that's what I try to do. Change administrations, I've seen how many presidents come and go since I've been here. I've lost count. I don't pay attention. How many heads of our department? I don't want that position. I've never sought it. I want to be able to be in the classroom with the students, sharing what... and telling them, and helping them think deeper.

So what has gone on at college? I don't know. I don't care! I've told you what I care about.

Michael: Do any of my colleagues have any additional questions, or...

Kacie: Dusty, I'm just wondering, from... with the approach that you have to teaching, And things have, changed over the past couple of months, with what's going on in the world, and... I'm wondering...

Dusty: By the way, it's not just 2 months, it's October.

Kacie: I'm sorry?

Dusty: Right. It's been since October. Two years ago, it's been going on for two years, and that's things that people think that this message has changed in the past couple of months. It has not. It has been 2 years that this.

Kacie: So I'm wondering, then, from your perspective, do you recognize anything that's concerning about your approach, why people are now feeling concerned to reply to you, or talk to you directly about things that they maybe don't agree with, or...

Dusty: Let's reflect the subject. I could call the group of you as a bunch of therapists, what do you think, and this is how I would ask my students, is I would say, what do you think is going on in the world right now that might be making people uncomfortable?

Kacie: Well, Dusty, we're here to...

Dusty: Has there been an election year, perhaps? Has there been wars, that is making people... that are making people uncomfortable? Perhaps people want to put their head in the sand? Both proverbially, but also close their office doors so that they don't have to have discussions, not go to the lunchroom to have a conversation, not to have... not to actually respond to somebody when they send you an email. That is my example of things that are going on that are making people uncomfortable. And so, oh, Dusty is making people uncomfortable. Because I'm fully opening their own...

Kacie: making people uncomfortable.

Dusty: What was it?

Kacie: How are you making people uncomfortable?

Dusty: You've... you've told me. We've had this discussion during this past 45 minutes to an hour.

Kacie: And I'm trying to understand...

Dusty: I'm... I'm, I'm sorry?

Kacie: I want to understand from your perspective how you see that. How you see that?

Dusty: How I see that. I see it as a bunch of... I'm going to watch my language here, but as a bunch of... of... of academic bullshit.

So how do I see that? I see that as garbage. I see that as censorship. I see that as them trying to shut me up. To toe the line, to duck my head, to hide in the... hide in the academic bomb shelter while people are held above me.

And I am not going to do that. I am not running to the bomb shelter while other people are dying. I am out there trying to save the world by educating people, by pushing their limits. By making them think, About the things that make them uncomfortable.

Michael: Dusty, with feeling like everyone's in the bomb shelter, and you're doing this alone, you're, like you said, no one's responding... Do you think there's any chance that maybe you're being more provocative in class? Like, you're trying to get this a point in more aggressively than you used to? Or you're just being maybe louder than you used to?

Dusty: Good question, Mark. Very good, excellent. I believe that you are... Addressing the needs and the things that are going on in society. Are you talking about Benghazi? Are you talking about the oil, the oil pipelines. You need to talk about what's going on in the world.

It's not about the elite. It's about what's going on in the world with the common man. And the struggles that they are having. And how that is being addressed. And how they are being suppressed.

So, yes, has the message changed over the past 25 years of my teaching? Absolutely. I'm not gonna sing a Billy Joel song, but it's the same thing. Listen to all of those different things that happened back then for his song. Now you sing another 25 here since 2000, and you have a whole set of other policies, war in Afghanistan, 9-11, you're talking about all of these bombings, you're talking about all of this stuff, school shootings, you're talking about all of this, so have I addressed all of those? Absolutely. And how they address... and how they are addressed in the world. But suddenly we have academic freedom being questioned, and now suddenly I'm in here for... Whatever this is.

Wendi: Oh, Dusty, you know, I think you gave us a lot of information, and I know we all want to be conscientious of your time, and the time that we spent.

Dusty: You have been wonderful, by the way. Let me just say, you have all, been responsive, asked wonderful questions, thought provocative. A little interrupting here and there, but overall, not bad, in terms of how you've approached this as a professional endeavor. But yes, continue, Wendi.

Wendi: Thank you. No, no, and that's okay, and I appreciate also your willingness to talk to us and being open, especially with some of the questions that we had to ask today. I do like to let people know about the process, you know, as far as going forward. We do schedule another meeting, so that, just so that you are aware. We do like to do that in a timely manner, so we're gonna work on scheduling something for us to meet again.

Dusty: With the administration to tell them I can get back into the classroom?

Wendi: Well, you know what, Dusty? I think it's a little bit of both, right? I think it's part of us meeting again to really kind of touch base, see how things are going. We are going to probably schedule some time, for us to kind of process what next steps would look like. So what I would like to do is figure out a time that works best for you to meet again.

Dusty: Well, considering I am currently suspended from the classroom, considering all of my grading has been caught up in the past two weeks that I've been out of the classroom, I'm pretty free with my schedule.

So, send me an invite. It's not as if I have anything going on. I don't know whether they've barred students from seeing me at this point. I know I've been barred from seeing students in the classroom and giving them any sort of advisement until this meeting happened. So yes, I'm pretty open right now, Wendi. Okay, great. So, whenever you wish to meet, I will be available.

Wendi: Okay, great. So what I'm gonna do is I'm gonna work on some times, I'm gonna send you an email with some.

Dusty: The sooner, the better, please, because I do not want my life continuing to be put on hold at this point, and I don't want the lives of my students to be put on hold as well for their education, because God knows who they put in that classroom. They haven't even told me.

Wendi: We'll try to work on also getting you some clarification on, kind of, at least next steps for you. That's not something we're privy to, but we'll try to at least make sure that somebody maybe gets in touch with you about that, okay?

Dusty: Thank you, Wendi. I really appreciate that. That's a wonderful piece of information, and as soon as possible, if we... move this process along.

Wendi: Alright, it was really nice meeting you, Dusty.

Dusty: Pleasure, nice meeting you, too. Sorry. Sorry for these circumstances.

Wendi: No, thank you so much.