



CALIFORNIA  
ACADEMY OF  
SCIENCES

**Transmittal Memo**  
**Legal Department**  
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**To:** Aleks Liou  
**Cc:** CAWU  
**From:** Michael Costanzo, General Counsel  
**Re:** Notice of Intent to Discipline

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**September 5, 2024**

I am writing to inform you that the California Academy of Sciences intends to terminate your employment, based on the following reasons:

1. On January 1, January 11 and April 28, 2024, you engaged with youths under your supervision through the Youth Action for the Planet (“YAP”) program via a non-Academy Instagram account “@youthsaction4planet.” This contact violated Academy policy as set forth in the Employee Handbook, which prohibits engaging with youth through social media.
2. On January 9 and February 8, 2024, the Digital Engagement Team directed you to instruct the youths under your supervision to cease posting on the @youthsaction4planet account, due to the fact that the name of the account, which is nearly identical to the name of the program you manage, could lead to the perception that it was an authorized Academy account, which it was not. Not only did you fail to ensure that the youths ceased posting to the account, you continued to interact with their posts after those dates, thus implicitly approving them. This conduct violated the Employee Handbook’s requirement that employees avoid the appearance of speaking on behalf of the Academy without authorization, and also constitutes a failure to carry out your duties as directed.
3. You maintained a drawing at your workspace, visible to the YAP participants, that included the phrase, “You fucked up.” This violated the Academy’s Code of Conduct with Youth and the Employee Handbook, both of which prohibit the use of profanity with or in the presence of youth.
4. You communicated with YAP participants through Discord and Google Docs accounts that were not Academy accounts, and refused to provide access to these accounts to the investigator and to the Academy even after being ordered to do so. This conduct violated the prohibitions against engaging with youth via social media, engaging in electronic communication with youths that is not business-related, having outside contact with youths that is not business-related, and having secrets with youth. These prohibitions are contained in the Employee Handbook and the Code of Conduct with Youth. Your refusal

to provide access to these accounts raises serious concerns about those communications and also constitutes insubordination, which is an independent ground for termination.

5. You arranged and attended a videoconference on Discord on February 27, 2024 for YAP participants that was not business-related. The title of the meeting on-screen was “Super Top Secret Confidential LDC Meeting Corner.” This conduct violated the prohibitions on engaging in outside contact and electronic communication that is not business-related, engaging with youth via social media, and having secrets with youth.
6. You were dishonest in your interview with the Academy’s investigator. Specifically:
  - a. You told the investigator that you did not check the Instagram account to see whether the youths had stopped posting after the Digital Engagement Team’s direction to you. That was not true, as determined by the fact that you interacted with that account after those dates.
  - b. You told the investigator that the drawing at your workspace was an artifact created by a teenager for your dissertation. The image contained in your dissertation is different from the one in your workspace and does not include the phrase “you fucked up.”

Each of these policy violations stands alone as grounds for dismissal. These policy violations are particularly egregious because (1) you were aware of the policies and agreed in writing to abide by them; and (2) more importantly, these policies are in place to protect minors.

This notice is intended to summarize the basis for the proposed action and is not intended to include every detail considered by the Academy in reaching its decision to propose termination. The Academy is engaged in negotiations with the Cal Academy Workers United regarding this proposed action and will notify you when those negotiations are concluded. In the interim, you will remain on administrative leave.