



## TEXAS FACULTY ASSOCIATION

*Affiliated with TSTA/NEA*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Faculty group: When will Collin College quit attacking the First Amendment?**

Texas Faculty Association President Pat Heintzelman released the following statement:

The Texas Faculty Association deplores the Collin College firing of Michael Phillips, the fourth professor in the past year whose contract was not renewed simply because faculty members chose to exercise their First Amendment right of free speech, including comments about safety precautions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Three of the professors whose contracts were not renewed — Phillips, Suzanne Jones and Audra Heaslip — were members of the Texas Faculty Association's affiliate at Collin College. Jones and Heaslip were fired at the end of last year's spring semester because they challenged the college's COVID reopening plans out of concern for their safety and the safety of their students and colleagues.

Phillips is vice president of the affiliate.

Collin College administrators also obviously have problems with faculty members exercising their right to associate with a faculty group.

How long am I going to have to keep reminding the Collin College president that college professors have the same rights of free speech and association as other Americans do? They don't lose them when they step onto a campus or into a classroom.

Phillips, who has taught at Collin College for more than 14 years, was earlier reprimanded for simply asking — not requiring — the students in his classroom to wear masks and practice social distancing. That punishment was obviously political because throughout the pandemic Collin College administrators have made student and employee safety secondary to Gov. Abbott's right-wing directives against mask mandates and other safety precautions.