

From: Mike Steele
Sent: 4/16/2015 12:39:49 PM
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Cc: wsteele@citadel.edu; Mark C. Brandenburg
Subject: Re: A Concerned Parent

BOV Members: I'll respond to Mrs. Procella.

Mark is reviewing a draft response now. Should have something to her today. You'll get a copy.

Mike

On 4/16/15, 12:45 AM, "Caterina Porcella" <cporcella@pausd.org> wrote:

Dear LTG Steele,

I am the mother of a current Citadel cadet very concerned with what I see happening at the Citadel this year. I begin to write this letter with some trepidation. I am afraid that by my speaking out my son may face retaliation.

However, the concerns I have are so great that I have decided to put this fear aside and write to you.

First let me state that I do not in any shape or form approve of hazing. I applaud the administration's efforts to eradicate hazing from cadet life.

Hazing is a serious offense. However, this year it appears that offenses that are clearly not hazing have been relabeled as hazing despite what is specifically written in the "blue book."

Although my husband and I have been in contact with many different parents and have talked to many cadets from several different companies, I will limit my comments here to what has happened to Sierra Company. My son, Matthew Bungarden is currently the First Sergeant in Sierra Company.

Several cadets in Sierra Company have been charged with hazing for making knobs do pushups. Apparently this year, having fourth classmen do pushups behind closed doors has become labeled as hazing. **It is not.** It may be unauthorized PT but it is not hazing. How can the new Commandant simply redefine the meaning of words that are clearly described without telling cadets prior to doing so and presumably issuing a written rule change.

In the "blue book" nothing in the definition of hazing includes making knobs do pushups as hazing.

As I stated earlier, I applaud the administration's effort to shift the culture at

the Citadel. The problem I have is with its execution. While in Charleston last week, my husband and I meet with both LTC Sberna and Captain Skardon to try and understand what was going on this year at the Citadel.

Both men were generous with their time and they provided us with a lot of information and insights to add to my husband's pages of notes gathered from both those conversations as well as conversations with other Citadel parents and cadets. What I tried to convey to LTC Sberna and I am not sure I was successful in the moment, and what I want to communicate to the Citadel Board of Visitors with this letter is that **the Citadel has failed my son and his classmates.**

I am a teacher. When I give a test and my students fail the test, I do not punish my students. I understand that I have failed to adequately teach the concept and I need to go back and reteach it. I need to go back and rework my lesson plan. As a teacher I look to the students who have good work habits and are solid students as my barometer. When I give a test and those students fail, I know I have failed them and I need to go back and retool my presentation. My son and his Sierra Company classmates are excellent cadets. My son has never served a punishment in his cadet career. The fact that so many cadets who love the Citadel, who have excelled while at the Citadel, and want only to do the right thing are being accused of wrong doing is a failure of good leadership at the top. Captain Skardon said to my husband and me words to this effect, "The administration does not wake up and say today whom can we catch doing something wrong?" Agreed, but I would respectfully suggest that good cadets do not wake up every day thinking, "What rule in the 'blue book' can I break today?" My son is an outstanding cadet, as are his classmates. They all strive to follow the established rules. If they have not properly understood the rules then they need to be retaught. Not every problem comes in the form of a nail; therefore, not every solution requires the use of a massive sledgehammer.

Cadets that have no previous violations are being hammered unjustifiably.

This is my concern. Good cadets are being charged with violations that have been upgraded from fourth-class violation to hazing and then are being used as evidence that the administration is eradicating hazing. As I said before, unauthorized PT is not hazing. It appears, that in the process of changing the Citadel culture, this conflation of hazing and pushups has been manufactured to create examples that can be used to show the corps the consequences of doing unauthorized PT. As a result, some of its finest cadets are being sacrificed in a manner that appears from all angles to be incredibly punitive and unjust.

In closing, I urge the Citadel Board of Visitors to encourage the Commandant's Office to revisit these cases. If cadets have engaged in unauthorized PT then that is what they should be charged with and the punishment should fit the crime. Also, when doling out punishments, a cadet's record should be considered. If a cadet is in good standing and has no previous record of wrongdoing, he should not get whacked with a sledgehammer. The Citadel is supposed to be an institution of higher