

FREE SPEECH FOR CAMPUS, INC.

Representative Amanda Nedweski
Room 7 West
State Capitol
PO Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708

Senator Cory Tomczyk
Room 310 South
State Capitol
PO Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707

Representative Nedweski, Senator Tomczyk:

I write on behalf of Free Speech for Campus (FSFC), an organization dedicated to promoting the values of freedom of speech on campus, enhanced faculty viewpoint diversity, and institutional neutrality on matters of public concern.

FSFC understands that the Legislative Council Study Committee on the Future of the Universities of Wisconsin (UW) is considering a variety of issues that affect the UW and its future scope, funding, staffing, and programs. As part of your efforts, we ask that you consider the following issues and address how your report will impact each of them.

Freedom of Speech

At its core, UW should commit to freedom of speech as reflected in the First Amendment to the US Constitution and Article 1, Section 3 of the Wisconsin Constitution. But there are numerous examples of incidents on campus where certain viewpoints have been interrupted or suppressed by students, administrators, and the public. The University must be willing to discipline those who disrupt the presentation or exchange of ideas and undertake efforts to reduce the likelihood that those disruptions take place. It must also make clear that it will not tolerate threats, harassment or protests that disrupt the learning environment. As the famous plaque at Bascom Hall at UW-Madison states, *"Whatever may be the limitations which trammel inquiry elsewhere, we believe that the great state University of Wisconsin should ever encourage*

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that continual and fearless sifting and winnowing by which alone the truth can be found.”

Faculty Viewpoint Diversity

The dissemination of knowledge is best served by promoting a faculty of various viewpoints. Yet studies of viewpoint orientation show that university faculties have become monolithically left wing in their orientation. As a recent article showed, 99% of UW-Madison faculty's federal political campaign contributions flowed to Democratic candidates or to Democratic PACs. This is an unacceptable imbalance. We ask the Committee to examine how to correct this imbalance of views as it considers the UW's future.

An example of academic freedom fostering traditional thought is the University of North Carolina, which this semester is opening the School of Civic Life and Leadership on its flagship campus. Its Board of Trustees decided that rather than attempt what would have been a slow and agonizing transformation of its existing faculty, it would simply create a new school that featured the traditional canons of Western thought and political tradition. A more local example of what the UW could do to enhance intellectual diversity is to take steps to fill the 'Conservative Chair' contemplated by the Legislative leadership and UW Regents in the December 2023 Agreement.

Institutional Neutrality

Regent Policy Document 4-21 confirmed the legislature's intent that the Universities of Wisconsin must encourage and promote teaching, learning, research, and service. The University must not hamper those activities by taking sides or prescribing an orthodoxy. As the 1967 University of Chicago Kalven report on university neutrality indicated, *“The mission of the university is the discovery, improvement, and dissemination of knowledge. Its domain of inquiry and scrutiny includes all aspects and all values of society...To perform its mission in the society, a university must*

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sustain an extraordinary environment of freedom of inquiry and maintain an independence from political fashions, passions, and pressures... Since the university is a community only for these limited and distinctive purposes, it is a community which cannot take collective action on the issues of the day without endangering the conditions for its existence and effectiveness...

“the neutrality of the university as an institution arises then not from a lack of courage nor out of indifference and insensitivity. It arises out of respect for free inquiry and the obligation to cherish a diversity of viewpoints.”

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We appreciate the opportunity to share these views with the members of the Committee and urge the Committee to address these issues as part of its report.

Sincerely,

Tim Higgins
President
Free Speech For Campus, Inc.

cc. Jay Rothman, President, Universities of Wisconsin