

Re: Update on August 25 incident at UNL

Roy Baker <rbaker@leg.ne.gov>

Thu 9/7/2017 1:38 PM

To: Hank Bounds <hbounds@nebraska.edu>;

Hank,

I always have had full confidence in your and Ronnie Green's abilities and expertise in handling matters such as this one. I will fiercely oppose any effort to get the Legislature involved in University administrative matters.

Thanks for keeping us in the information loop.

Roy

Senator Roy Baker
District 30

[Click here to be added to our electronic newsletter mailing list.](#)

On Thu, Sep 7, 2017 at 9:42 AM, Hank Bounds <hbounds@nebraska.edu> wrote:

Senators,

You're likely aware of an August 25 incident at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln that has generated conversation about free speech and standards of behavior on our campuses.

I have carefully reviewed the facts. I want to share those with you and let you know how we're handling this matter.

First, know this: I am a vigorous defender of free speech from all viewpoints. I believe just as strongly in our obligation to exercise that right responsibly. We all deserve to be treated with respect and civility.

In this case, our expectations for civility were not met when a lecturer who's also a graduate student used an offensive gesture and language toward an undergraduate student. In my view – and many others' – this behavior was inappropriate. Perhaps even more importantly, it was not representative of a university where the robust free exchange of ideas takes place 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, virtually without incident.

The exchange on August 25 was an outlier, but we're troubled that a student was treated this way and we are taking appropriate action. While privacy laws prevent us from discussing specific personnel actions, I do want to make you aware that because of safety concerns raised by this incident, we have removed the lecturer from the classroom and re-assigned her to non-teaching duties.

I also want to point out that the University of Nebraska does not have "free speech zones." We do have general policies regarding the use of campus space in order to maintain a safe learning environment, and we're furthering our training so that employees better understand the policies and perspectives we have in place.

As a university community, we're always asking ourselves what we can do to build on our long tradition of inclusivity and become an even more welcoming place for all students and employees. We're not perfect – but we should be proud that the people who make up this university, and our state, largely understand how important it is to treat each other well, to listen with sincerity, and to have open dialogue where disagreements can be passionate but respectful. Those are the values we espouse, and I'd invite you to visit our campuses anytime to see firsthand that the free exchange of ideas is occurring civilly each day – just as it should at a public institution of higher learning.

Please let me know if you have questions, and thank you for your service to Nebraska.

Sincerely,

Hank

Hank M. Bounds, Ph.D.

President, University of Nebraska

[3835 Holdrege Street | Lincoln, NE 68583-0745](#)

[402.472.8636](tel:402.472.8636) | hbounds@nebraska.edu

[@hankbounds](#)

Re: Update on August 25 incident at UNL

Carol Blood <cblood@leg.ne.gov>

Thu 9/7/2017 2:13 PM

From: Hank Bounds <hbounds@nebraska.edu>

Thank you for your response.

On Thu, Sep 7, 2017 at 9:42 AM, Hank Bounds <hbounds@nebraska.edu> wrote:

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President, University of Nebraska

[3835 Holdrege Street | Lincoln, NE 68583](https://www.unl.edu/holdrege)-0745

[402.472.8636](tel:402.472.8636) | hbounds@nebraska.edu

@hankbounds

From: Sen. Laura Ebke
To: [Hank Bounds](#)
Cc: ["Pete Ricketts"](#); [Tim Clare](#); [Howard Hawks](#); [Jim Pillen](#); [Bob Whitehouse](#); [Robert Schafer](#); [Paul Kenney](#); [Bob Phares](#); [Hal Daub](#); [Ronnie Green](#); [Jeffrey Gold](#); [o Kristensen](#)
Subject: RE: Response to Recent Hastings Tribune Op-Ed
Date: Tuesday, October 31, 2017 9:01:45 PM

President Bounds,

Thank you for your response to my colleagues' letter.

While there are many things that concern me about the incident from 10 weeks ago, and many legislators got pulled into making comments concurrent to the event, I believe that this is now a matter better suited for the elected Regents to deal with.

The Legislature appropriates funds to the University, and we can (of course) decrease the appropriation if we feel it necessary. That said, citizens of this state have elected members of the Board of Regents to oversee these matters of policy. To the extent that people have continued to ask me about this I have recommended that they contact their Regent.

I'm proud to be an alumni of the University of Nebraska. I'm confident that you all will do what needs to be done to protect the reputation and academic integrity of the University—you don't need a bunch of legislators trying to micromanage well beyond our experience.

Best wishes,

Laura Ebke

Senator Laura Ebke
Judiciary Committee Chair
Nebraska Legislative District 32
(402) 471-2711
Nebraska State Capitol Room 1103

From: Hank Bounds [mailto:hbounds@nebraska.edu]
Sent: Tuesday, October 31, 2017 4:59 PM
To: Hank Bounds <hbounds@nebraska.edu>
Cc: Pete Ricketts <pete.ricketts@nebraska.gov>; Tim Clare <tclare@nebraska.edu>; Howard Hawks <hhawks@nebraska.edu>; Jim Pillen <jpillen@nebraska.edu>; Bob Whitehouse <bwhitehouse@nebraska.edu>; Robert Schafer <rschafer@nebraska.edu>; Paul Kenney <pkenney@nebraska.edu>; Bob Phares <bphares@nebraska.edu>; Hal Daub <hdaub@nebraska.edu>; Ronald D Green <rgreen@unl.edu>; Jeffrey P Gold <jeffrey.gold@unmc.edu>; Douglas A. Kristensen <kristensend@unk.edu>
Subject: Fw: Response to Recent Hastings Tribune Op-Ed

Senators:

Below is my email to Senators Halloran, Erdman, and Brewer in response to their Op-Ed in the Hastings Tribune. A copy of the Op-Ed and Chancellor Green's response are also attached for your reference.

Hank

Hank M. Bounds, Ph.D.

President, University of Nebraska
3835 Holdrege Street | Lincoln, NE 68583-0745
402.472.8636 | hbounds@nebraska.edu
@hankbounds

From: Hank Bounds

Sent: Tuesday, October 31, 2017 4:09 PM

To: Steve Halloran; serdman@leg.ne.gov; Tom Brewer

Subject: Response to Recent Hastings Tribune Op-Ed

Dear Senators Halloran, Erdman, and Brewer:

Recently you co-signed an opinion piece questioning the University of Nebraska's campus climate and the character of its leadership.

I don't relish the prospect of a public dispute with members of the Legislature. Unfortunately, no one contacted me to discuss your questions before the piece was sent to media, even though senators have my cell phone number [REDACTED] and email address (hbounds@nebraska.edu). And when factors are misrepresented to the degree that they have been in this case, I'm going to speak up.

Chancellor Green has provided you a detailed review of the facts surrounding the incident that took place almost 10 weeks ago at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. His letter is attached for your reference. I fully agree with it.

I have some questions of my own.

When a letter is sent to the newspaper before anyone picks up the phone to call me, what's the real intent?

Is this a sincere effort to look out for the best interests of our young people, and move our University and state forward? Or is it a personal political agenda?

The University of Nebraska isn't perfect. The Chancellor, members of the Board of Regents, and I have said repeatedly and unequivocally how upset we are with the behavior of the graduate teaching assistant involved in the August 25 incident. This won't be the only time we fall short. We have work to do in becoming a more welcoming place for all of our 53,000 students and 16,000 employees. It's why I have stood up a task force to examine our policies on free expression and facilities use to ensure they are clear and consistent across campuses and bring a recommendation to the Board for consideration. It's why I'm sponsoring a speaker series this year on the unconscious biases we all carry about each other. It's why we communicate regularly with our students about the standards of behavior to which we hold ourselves.

Even as we work to improve, here's what comes to mind for me when someone mentions the faculty and staff of the University of Nebraska.

I think about the scientists who are searching for a cure for cancer and the doctors and nurses who are caring day and night for those diagnosed.

I think about the researchers whom you and I had a great conversation about, Senator Brewer, whose work in defense is helping more of our men and women in uniform come home safely.

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I think about thousands of stories of teaching, research, and services to the people of Nebraska that aren't being told because we're still talking about an isolated incident that is being used to advance a political agenda.

I moved my family 1,200 miles from home because I believed Nebraska was the kind of place where together we could make a real difference. I've met thousands of students and parents, faculty and staff, elected leaders, alumni and friends, farmers and ranchers, and community members from Scottsbluff to Omaha who have proven this to be true. They love their University, and they've shown that Nebraskans are people who get work done, who can disagree with grace, and who know how to put aside their differences to work toward a greater good.

I'm asking you to join my colleagues and I at the University of Nebraska in advancing the Governor's goal to grow our state for the future. The next generation is watching.

Sincerely,

Hank

Hank M. Bounds, Ph.D.

President, University of Nebraska

3835 Holdrege Street | Lincoln, NE 68583-0745

402.472.8636 | hbounds@nebraska.edu

@hankbounds

Re: Update on August 25 incident at UNL

Steve Erdman <serdman@leg.ne.gov>

Thu 9/7/2017 9:54 AM

To: Hank Bounds <hbounds@nebraska.edu>;

Hank,

I have read your announcement with interest.

I am very disappointed that you did not terminate these two people!

In my opinion that's what leadership would look like.

Reassigning them to non-teaching duty is a way for you to save face with all of those teachers and the people in the union. This is unacceptable in my opinion and these people need to be eliminated from employment at the University of Nebraska.

You and your team had an opportunity with this issue to show what university really stands for! I do not believe that this is what you want to university to be, a place where you can do whatever you want as a professor and still keep your job. Sincerely Steve

Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 7, 2017, at 8:42 AM, Hank Bounds <hbounds@nebraska.edu> wrote:

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Please let me know if you have questions, and thank you for your service to Nebraska.

Sincerely,

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President, University of Nebraska

3835 Holdrege Street | Lincoln, NE 68583-0745

402.472.8636 | hbounds@nebraska.edu

@hankbounds

December 12, 2017

The Honorable Steve Erdman
Nebraska Legislature
State Capitol, Room 1529
Lincoln, NE 68509-4604

RE: August 25 incident – University policy and governance

Dear Senator Erdman:

I am writing in response to your email dated November 29, 2017 to President Bounds that was shared with me and the other members of the Board of Regents. The email addressed communications that President Bounds and Chancellor Green had with you, Senator Brewer, and Senator Halloran on November 16 and 17.

I have spoken with President Bounds and Chancellor Green. I learned the following: In your conversation on November 17, you stated your position that Courtney Lawton's employment relationship with the University of Nebraska must be terminated immediately and that she must not receive any additional compensation from or remain as a student at the University. You told them that FIRE needs to be involved in the University's response to the incident involving Ms. Lawton that took place on August 25. You also told them that these steps you expected the University to take were "non-negotiable."

The University is governed by the elected Board of Regents. In respect to the independence of the University, I support President Bounds and Chancellor Green in their refusal to agree to your demands.

I believe your letter is incorrect in stating that President Bounds told you Ms. Lawton is suing the University. He did discuss the possibility that Ms. Lawton could file a lawsuit and that you could be involved in litigation if it were filed. My understanding is that the conversation concluded with both of you agreeing that you would be discussing any of your legal liability concerns with the Attorney General's office. University attorneys do not provide legal advice to members of the Legislature.

I will advise the other Regents that I have responded to your email of November 21, on behalf of the President, Chancellor, and the Board of Regents. We are informed of your advice and input on the details of University management at UNL regarding the incident on August 25. Further advice on the management decisions of the President and Chancellor should be communicated in consultation with the leadership of the Legislature to the Chair or Executive Committee of the Board of Regents.

Sincerely,



Robert L. Whitehouse
Chairman

From: Steve Erdman [<mailto:serdman@leg.ne.gov>]
Sent: Thursday, November 30, 2017 8:44 PM
To: Bob Whitehouse
Subject: Re: Courtney Lawton Lawsuit

Regent Whitehouse, thank you for the reply.
Steve Erdman

Sent from my iPhone

On Nov 30, 2017, at 8:13 PM, Bob Whitehouse <bwhitehouse@nebraska.edu> wrote:

Senator Erdman,
Please pardon the slow reply to your email. I was not involved in the matter you ask about and needed to communicate with the President. He has assured me he will be in contact with you shortly. I assume he will reply to you and other members of the board as you have done here. Hopefully the matter can be resolved satisfactorily.
Respectfully,
Regent Bob Whitehouse
Chair, Board of Regents

From: jhunt@leg.ne.gov [<mailto:jhunt@leg.ne.gov>] **On Behalf Of** Steve Erdman
Sent: Wednesday, November 29, 2017 2:54 PM
To: Bob Whitehouse
Cc: Tim Clare; Howard Hawks; Jim Pillen; Robert Schafer; Paul Kenney; Bob Phares; Hal Daub
Subject: Fwd: Courtney Lawton Lawsuit

Bob, University of Nebraska President, Hank Bounds, called me on Nov. 17 to alert me to a letter I would soon be receiving either from him or an attorney outlining my liability in regards to disciplinary action being taken against graduate teaching assistant, Courtney Lawton. Mr. Bounds informed me at the time that Courtney Lawton was suing the University of Nebraska. I have not received this letter, and Hank Bounds has not responded to the e-mail I sent to him on Nov. 21 (see below). I would like to know exactly what my liability is in this matter. Steve

Senator Steve Erdman
State Capitol, Room 1529
Lincoln, NE 68509
402-471-2616

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Steve Erdman <serdman@leg.ne.gov>
Date: Tue, Nov 21, 2017 at 1:56 PM
Subject: Courtney Lawton Lawsuit
To: Hank Bounds <hbounds@nebraska.edu>

I would like to follow up on our phone conversation from last Friday, Nov. 17. During that conversation you alerted me about a letter I would soon be receiving. I recall that you said the letter would be sent either by you or an attorney, and would outline my liability in regards to disciplinary action taken against graduate teaching assistant, Courtney Lawton. You indicated that Courtney Lawton is suing the University of Nebraska. I have yet to receive this letter. Will you be sending it via certified mail or just e-mailing it to me? I look forward to reading it and understanding your attorney's perception regarding my liability in this matter. Did you receive my e-mail yesterday? Happy Thanksgiving! Steve

Senator Steve Erdman
State Capitol, Room 1529
Lincoln, NE 68509
402-471-2616

From: tchappelear@leg.ne.gov
To: [Hank Bounds](#); [Ronnie Green](#)
Subject: Letter from Senator Geist
Date: Tuesday, September 19, 2017 11:54:58 AM
Attachments: [Bounds 9.17.pdf](#)

Please see the attached letter from Senator Geist. A formal copy has been placed in the mail.

Thank you,

Trinity D. Chappellear
Legislative Aide
Senator Suzanne Geist, District 25
Room 1115
w: [402-471-2731](tel:402-471-2731)
tchappelear@leg.ne.gov

Senator Suzanne Geist

Legislative District 25
Room 1115
402-471-2731
sgeist@leg.ne.gov

Nebraska State Legislature

SENATOR SUZANNE GEIST

District 25
State Capitol
PO Box 94604
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-4604
(402) 471-2731
sgeist@leg.ne.gov



COMMITTEES

Vice Chairperson - Legislative Performance Audit
Natural Resources
Transportation and Telecommunications

September 19, 2017

Hank M. Bounds, President
University of Nebraska
3835 Holdrege St
Lincoln, NE 68583-0745

Dear President Bounds,

I have been closely following the University of Nebraska's response to the unprofessional behavior by five professors, including Professor Amanda Gailey and teaching assistant Ms. Courtney Lawton. To say I am disappointed by the University's lack of response is a gross understatement.

I continue to be contacted by constituents, including being stopped in public, by those who are demanding to know when the University of Nebraska is going to discipline or fire those involved, or asking when or if the legislature to take action. What incenses most people is the fact that this was faculty abusing their authority over a student by trying to bully and embarrass her into silence.

The University's "Beliefs on Diversity and Inclusion" state:

At the University of Nebraska, we strive for excellence in all that we do. True excellence requires that each individual be able to work and learn in an atmosphere of respect, dignity, and acceptance. Our commitment to diversity and inclusion requires each of us to continuously ensure our interactions be respectful, protect free speech and inspire academic freedom.
At the University of Nebraska:

- We value equity, inclusion, and dignity for all.
- We strive for excellence and recognize that our differences make us stronger. We respect and seek out inclusion of differences, realizing we can learn from each other.

- We insist on a culture of respect, and recognize that words and actions matter. The absence of action and words also matter.
- We believe in the freedom of speech, and encourage the civil and respectful expression of ideas and opinions.
- We all share in the responsibility to create a positive culture and to safeguard equity, inclusion, dignity, and respect for all. Each member of the University community—faculty, staff and students—should be a role model for others.
- We take action when we observe someone being treated unfairly or in a demeaning manner.

From the public's view, and frankly from my own view, the University has not upheld these beliefs. The only action taken appears to be Ms. Lawton's removal from the classroom for her protection, not as a form of discipline, and the Omaha World Herald article stating Professor Julia Schleck shared at a rally last evening that UNL administrators sent a letter to Ms. Lawton, criticizing her behavior.

I want to be informed by you the steps the University of Nebraska is taking to assure every student who depends on a grade from one of these faculty members who all appear to be from the English Department, is being treated and graded fairly. There should be, at minimum, a formal plan in writing.

I also want to be informed who it is that students should contact if this unprofessional behavior is displayed in the future, in or out of the classroom, and if this person's name has been shared with the student body.

The unprofessional behavior by these faculty members is an embarrassment to the University and our state. Their actions must be proportionately addressed to allow the rebuilding of trust between the university, students, their parents, and the taxpayers.

Sincerely,



Senator Suzanne Geist
District 25

cc: Chancellor Ronnie Green

From: Ronnie Green
To: [John Kuehn](#)
Subject: RE: Clarification
Date: Friday, November 3, 2017 5:13:00 PM
Attachments: [image005.png](#)

Hi John-

Hope that this finds you doing well.

I would be happy to visit with you again about this if further clarification is needed. The incident is captured on surveillance camera that goes back and forth in 10 minute increments between the plaza where tabling was occurring and the plaza fountains area. The tape does capture the period under question in the incident and parallels the written and verbal accounts given by the individuals involved, as I shared with you when we met in late September.

Best regards-



Ronnie D. Green, Ph.D.
Chancellor



University of Nebraska-Lincoln

201 Canfield Administration
Lincoln, Nebraska 68583
(402) 472-2116
rgreen@unl.edu
@RonnieDGreen

From: John Kuehn [mailto:jkuehn@leg.ne.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, October 31, 2017 12:44 PM
To: Ronnie Green <rgreen@unl.edu>
Subject: Clarification

Chancellor Green,

When we met in my office on 22 September, you specifically stated you had security camera footage that documented the interaction between Katlynn Mullen, Amanda Gailey, and Courtney Lawton. I took you at your word.

Several of my colleagues informed me last week that a complete video record does not exist,

and that a significant lapse of time is missing during the interaction.

What is the actual status of the video documentation?

John

John L. Kuehn
Senator, District 38
Nebraska Legislature
402-471-2732

Clay, Franklin, Kearney, Nuckolls, Phelps, Webster, and southwest Buffalo counties

Re: Response to Recent Hastings Tribune Op-Ed

Hank Bounds

Wed 11/1/2017 10:14 AM

Sent Items

To: John McCollister <jmccollister@leg.ne.gov>;

Thanks, John. I appreciate your support.

Hank M. Bounds, Ph.D.

President, University of Nebraska

3835 Holdrege Street | Lincoln, NE 68583-0745

402.472.8636 | hbounds@nebraska.edu

@hankbounds

On Nov 1, 2017, at 9:38 AM, John McCollister <jmccollister@leg.ne.gov> wrote:

Thank you Hank - please don't let a few bad apples spoil the good relationships that most state senators have with you and the University.

John McCollister

NE State Senator John McCollister

District 20

402-471-2622

jmcollister@leg.ne.gov

On Tue, Oct 31, 2017 at 4:59 PM, Hank Bounds <hbounds@nebraska.edu> wrote:

Senators:

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Subject: Response to Recent Hastings Tribune Op-Ed

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President, University of Nebraska
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[402.472.8636](tel:402.472.8636) | hbounds@nebraska.edu
[@hankbounds](#)

Re: Update on August 25 incident at UNL

Thu 9/7/2017 11:26 AM

To: Hank Bounds <hbounds@nebraska.edu>;

Well done Hank.

On my first day on the UNL campus in the fall of 1966, I saw a guy on the south side of the NE Union dressed in a Nazi brown shirt outfit holding a huge Nazi flag. There was no crowd and nobody paid much attention to him. I don't even think the occurrence was mentioned in the Daily Nebraskan or the Lincoln Journal Star. You probably aren't aware, but stranger things happened on the UNL in the late 60's.

There are always going to be outliers with strange things to say on a University campus, but, as you well stated, all people associated with the university should have an absolute right to express their opinions.

Good going. Best

John

NE State Senator John McCollister
District 20
402-471-2622
jmccollister@leg.ne.gov

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I have carefully reviewed the facts. I want to share those with you and let you know how we're handling this matter.

First, know this: I am a vigorous defender of free speech from all viewpoints. I believe just as strongly in our obligation to exercise that right responsibly. We all deserve to be treated with respect and civility.

In this case, our expectations for civility were not met when a lecturer who's also a graduate student used an offensive gesture and language toward an undergraduate student. In my view – and many others' – this behavior was inappropriate. Perhaps even more importantly, it was not representative of a university where the robust free exchange of ideas takes place 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, virtually without incident.

The exchange on August 25 was an outlier, but we're troubled that a student was treated this way and we are taking appropriate action. While privacy laws prevent us from discussing specific personnel actions, I do want to make you aware that because of safety concerns raised by this incident, we have removed the lecturer from the classroom and re-assigned her to non-teaching duties.

I also want to point out that the University of Nebraska does not have "free speech zones." We do have general policies regarding the use of campus space in order to maintain a safe learning environment, and we're furthering our training so that employees better understand the policies and perspectives we have in place.

As a university community, we're always asking ourselves what we can do to build on our long tradition of inclusivity and become an even more welcoming place for all students and employees. We're not perfect – but we should be proud that the people who make up this university, and our state, largely understand how important it is to treat each other well, to listen with sincerity, and to have open dialogue where disagreements can be passionate but respectful. Those are the values we espouse, and I'd invite you to visit our campuses anytime to see firsthand that the free exchange of ideas is occurring civilly each day – just as it should at a public institution of higher learning.

Please let me know if you have questions, and thank you for your service to Nebraska.

Sincerely,

Hank

Hank M. Bounds, Ph.D.

President, University of Nebraska

[3835 Holdrege Street | Lincoln, NE 68583-0745](#)

[402.472.8636](tel:402.472.8636) | hbounds@nebraska.edu

[@hankbounds](#)

From: Adam Morfeld
To: [Ronnie Green](mailto:Ronnie.Green); [Michelle Waite](mailto:Michelle.Waite)
Subject: Fwd: 1st Amendment Issues
Date: Wednesday, August 30, 2017 10:18:32 AM

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Steve Erdman <serdman@leg.ne.gov>
Date: August 30, 2017 at 10:15:39 AM CDT
To: Suzanne Geist <sgeist@leg.ne.gov>
Cc: "Sen. Laura Ebke" <lebke@leg.ne.gov>, "Leg. Senators" <leg.senators@leg.ne.gov>
Subject: Re: 1st Amendment Issues

Good morning, from the west.

I called Ronnie Green's office yesterday and left a message for him. I ask him to call me so I can understand the university's position on this. I will ask him to fire these teachers. It is time for someone to defend the young people who are conservative.

The teachers said that the student wasn't in a free speech zone neither were they! I attended an area school board function last night. I sat next to a gentleman who's daughter attends NU.

She called her dad yesterday and ask what do I do if I get on these teachers?

This is a problem for the university!

The University of Missouri have had issues such as this. And they have not dealt with them correctly and it's my understanding that the Enrollment is down 2000 in the last couple years because of it.

Enough is enough!

Steve

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 30, 2017, at 8:22 AM, Suzanne Geist <sgeist@leg.ne.gov> wrote:

Laura,

Thank you for your thoughtful, articulate response and for sharing it with us. I'm interested in what the action will be from the University.

Senator Suzanne Geist

Legislative District 25
Room 1115

402-471-2731
sgeist@leg.ne.gov

On Tue, Aug 29, 2017 at 7:01 PM, Sen. Laura Ebke
<lebke@leg.ne.gov> wrote:

Colleagues,

For what it's worth, I was asked by the guy who broke the original story (via email) that is going viral about the issue on campus. This is what I told him:

"1) I'm not keen on the concept of "free speech zones", because I believe that Universities should be a "safe space" for speech of all types; 2) I'm not sure of the University's policy, however my sense is that there's a fundamental difference between someone who is mobile, and handing out materials, carrying a sign, or talking to people, and someone who has set up a table, or a tent, or anything else that is "temporarily permanent" and not easy to move—the usual "time, place and manner" question where 1st Amendment demonstration is concerned may be at play here, and I would want to see the University's policy in that regard before coming to a final conclusion on that; 3) as one who was a teaching assistant on the University campus back in the late 90s, and one who has taught many college courses since receiving my doctorate degree, I find the behavior of the faculty member and graduate student questionable from an ethical point of view and arguably contrary to the AAUP code of ethics (<https://www.aaup.org/report/statement-professional-ethics>). While teachers do not lose their 1st Amendment rights, nor their responsibility to challenge students to encourage critical thinking, taunting and berating students on campus, and engaging in an offensive exercise of free speech on campus, has the potential to create a hostile learning environment. No one would condone such behavior by a supervisor of an employee, and yet it seems ironic that these instructors believe that it's appropriate to engage in behavior which they would see as creating a hostile work environment if directed at them by their Department Chair."

(Note: I am not a lawyer, nor do I play one on TV)

Senator Laura Ebke

Judiciary Committee Chair

Nebraska Legislative District 32

(402) 471-2711

Nebraska State Capitol Room 1103

From: Adam Morfeld
To: [Michelle Waite](#); [Ronnie Green](#)
Subject: Fwd: 1st Amendment Issues
Date: Wednesday, August 30, 2017 10:03:38 AM

Begin forwarded message:

From: Steve Halloran <shalloran@leg.ne.gov>
Subject: Re: 1st Amendment Issues
Date: August 30, 2017 at 9:58:33 AM CDT
To: Suzanne Geist <sgeist@leg.ne.gov>
Cc: "Sen. Laura Ebke" <lebke@leg.ne.gov>, "Leg. Senators" <leg.senators@leg.ne.gov>

There are some quotes from the University President Hank Bounds in today's LJS. I agree with Suzanne, it will be interesting to see if any actions will be taken with regards to the University professor or graduate student.

Senator Steve Halloran
Nebraska Legislature
District 33

PO Box 94604
Lincoln, NE 68509-4604
(402) 471-2712

[Facebook Page](#)

On Wed, Aug 30, 2017 at 9:22 AM, Suzanne Geist <sgeist@leg.ne.gov> wrote:
Laura,

Thank you for your thoughtful, articulate response and for sharing it with us. I'm interested in what the action will be from the University.

Senator Suzanne Geist

Legislative District 25
Room 1115
[402-471-2731](tel:402-471-2731)
sgeist@leg.ne.gov

On Tue, Aug 29, 2017 at 7:01 PM, Sen. Laura Ebke <lebke@leg.ne.gov> wrote:

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Senator Laura Ebke

Judiciary Committee Chair

Nebraska Legislative District 32

(402) 471-2711

Nebraska State Capitol Room 1103

From: Adam Morfeld
To: [Ronnie Green](#); [Michelle Waite](#)
Subject: Fwd: 1st Amendment Issues
Date: Tuesday, August 29, 2017 9:17:55 PM

FYI

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Sen. Laura Ebke" <lebke@leg.ne.gov>
Date: August 29, 2017 at 7:01:41 PM CDT
To: "'Leg. Senators'" <leg.senators@leg.ne.gov>
Subject: 1st Amendment Issues

Colleagues,

For what it's worth, I was asked by the guy who broke the original story (via email) that is going viral about the issue on campus. This is what I told him:

"1) I'm not keen on the concept of "free speech zones", because I believe that Universities should be a "safe space" for speech of all types; 2) I'm not sure of the University's policy, however my sense is that there's a fundamental difference between someone who is mobile, and handing out materials, carrying a sign, or talking to people, and someone who has set up a table, or a tent, or anything else that is "temporarily permanent" and not easy to move—the usual "time, place and manner" question where 1st Amendment demonstration is concerned may be at play here, and I would want to see the University's policy in that regard before coming to a final conclusion on that; 3) as one who was a teaching assistant on the University campus back in the late 90s, and one who has taught many college courses since receiving my doctorate degree, I find the behavior of the faculty member and graduate student questionable from an ethical point of view and arguably contrary to the AAUP code of ethics (<https://www.aaup.org/report/statement-professional-ethics>). While teachers do not lose their 1st Amendment rights, nor their responsibility to challenge students to encourage critical thinking, taunting and berating students on campus, and engaging in an offensive exercise of free speech on campus, has the potential to create a hostile learning environment. No one would condone such behavior by a supervisor of an employee, and yet it seems ironic that these instructors believe that it's appropriate to engage in behavior which they would see as creating a hostile work environment if directed at them by their Department Chair."

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Senator Laura Ebke

Judiciary Committee Chair
Nebraska Legislative District 32
(402) 471-2711
Nebraska State Capitol Room 1103

Re: Response to Recent Hastings Tribune Op-Ed

Thu 11/2/2017 8:11 AM

Sent Items

To: Matt Williams <mwilliams@leg.ne.gov>;

Let's plan to visit at the game. Have a great week.

Hank M. Bounds, Ph.D.

President, University of Nebraska

[3835 Holdrege Street | Lincoln, NE 68583-0745](#)

[402.472.8636](tel:402.472.8636) | hbounds@nebraska.edu

@hankbounds

On Nov 1, 2017, at 3:19 PM, Matt Williams <mwilliams@leg.ne.gov> wrote:

Give me a call anytime. I talking in both Cozad and Lexington tomorrow and then driving to Lincoln for ll day Friday. I'll be in Ronnie's Box for the game on Saturday. Probably see you there.

Matt. From my ipad

Sen. Matt Williams

District 36

402-471-2642

News.legislature.ne.gov/dist36/

On Nov 1, 2017, at 3:04 PM, Hank Bounds <hbounds@nebraska.edu> wrote:

Thanks, Matt. I really appreciate your support. I would like to talk in the next few days to get your advice on how to manage this going forward. Hank

Hank M. Bounds, Ph.D.

President, University of Nebraska

[3835 Holdrege Street | Lincoln, NE 68583-0745](#)

[402.472.8636](tel:402.472.8636) | hbounds@nebraska.edu

@hankbounds

On Nov 1, 2017, at 2:10 PM, Matt Williams <mwilliams@leg.ne.gov> wrote:

Hank,

Thanks to you and Ronnie Green for addressing this issue head on! I'm very proud of "our" University. I'm also very proud of our University leadership. Your actions demonstrate the proper way to handle difficult situations and conflict. I share your disappointment in how a few members of the legislature have misrepresented the facts surrounding the issues. You have my continued commitment to work to bring the legislature and the university together on issues involving the budget and issues pertaining to how the university can help grow Nebraska. We have critical choices to make and as the old philosopher once said, "choose wisely"! With your leadership we will.

Matt. From my ipad

Sen. Matt Williams

District 36

402-471-2642

News.legislature.ne.gov/dist36/

On Oct 31, 2017, at 4:59 PM, Hank Bounds <hbounds@nebraska.edu> wrote:

Senators:

Below is my email to Senators Halloran, Erdman, and Brewer in response to their Op-Ed in the Hastings Tribune. A copy of the Op-Ed and Chancellor Green's response are also attached for your reference.

Hank

Hank M. Bounds, Ph.D.
President, University of Nebraska
3835 Holdrege Street | Lincoln, NE 68583-0745
402.472.8636 | hbounds@nebraska.edu
[@hankbounds](#)

From: Hank Bounds
Sent: Tuesday, October 31, 2017 4:09 PM
To: Steve Halloran; serdman@leg.ne.gov; Tom Brewer
Subject: Response to Recent Hastings Tribune Op-Ed

Dear Senators Halloran, Erdman, and Brewer:

Recently you co-signed an opinion piece questioning the University of Nebraska's campus climate and the character of its leadership.

I don't relish the prospect of a public dispute with members of the Legislature. Unfortunately, no one contacted me to discuss your questions before the piece was sent to media, even though senators have my cell phone number [REDACTED] and email address (hbounds@nebraska.edu). And when factors are misrepresented to the degree that they have been in this case, I'm going to speak up.

Chancellor Green has provided you a detailed review of the facts surrounding the incident that took place almost 10 weeks ago at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. His letter is attached for your reference. I fully agree with it.

I have some questions of my own.

When a letter is sent to the newspaper before anyone picks up the phone to call me, what's the real intent?

Is this a sincere effort to look out for the best interests of our young people, and move our University and state forward? Or is it a personal political agenda?

The University of Nebraska isn't perfect. The Chancellor, members of the Board of Regents, and I have said repeatedly and unequivocally how upset we are with the behavior of the graduate teaching assistant involved in the August 25 incident. This won't be the only time we fall short. We have work to do in becoming a more welcoming place for all of our 53,000 students and 16,000 employees. It's why I have stood up a task force to examine our policies on free expression and facilities use to ensure they are clear and consistent across campuses and bring a recommendation to the Board for consideration. It's why I'm sponsoring a speaker series this year on the unconscious biases we all carry about each other. It's why we communicate regularly with our students about the standards of behavior to which we hold ourselves.

Even as we work to improve, here's what comes to mind for me when someone mentions the faculty and staff of the University of Nebraska.

I think about the scientists who are searching for a cure for cancer and the doctors and nurses who are caring day and night for those diagnosed.

I think about the researchers whom you and I had a great conversation about, Senator Brewer, whose work in defense is helping more of our men and women in uniform come home safely.

I think about the educators whose personal attention to our young people, many of whom are the first in their families to attend college, helps 11,000 of them cross the finish line every year.

I think about agricultural innovations taking place in our fields and labs that will feed hungry people around the world.

I think about thousands of stories of teaching, research, and services to the people of Nebraska that aren't being told because we're still talking about an isolated incident that is being used to advance a political agenda.

I moved my family 1,200 miles from home because I believed Nebraska was the kind of place where together we could make a real difference. I've met thousands of students and parents, faculty and staff, elected leaders, alumni and friends, farmers and ranchers, and community members from Scottsbluff to Omaha who have proven this to be true. They love their University, and they've shown that Nebraskans are people who get work done, who can disagree with grace, and who know how to put aside their differences to work toward a greater good.

I'm asking you to join my colleagues and I at the University of Nebraska in advancing the Governor's goal to grow our state for the future. The next generation is watching.

Sincerely,

Hank

Hank M. Bounds, Ph.D.
President, University of Nebraska
3835 Holdrege Street | Lincoln, NE 68583-0745
402.472.8636 | hbounds@nebraska.edu
[@hankbounds](#)

<Senators letter 2017-10-31.pdf>

<5 questions for UNL _ Opinion _ hastingstribune.pdf>

From: Ronnie Green
To: [Matt Williams](#)
Subject: RE: Response to Recent Hastings Tribune Op-Ed
Date: Wednesday, November 1, 2017 2:17:00 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Thanks, Matt.



Ronnie D. Green, Ph.D.
Chancellor



University of Nebraska-Lincoln

201 Canfield Administration
Lincoln, Nebraska 68583
(402) 472-2116
rgreen@unl.edu
@RonnieDGreen

From: Matt Williams [mailto:mwilliams@leg.ne.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, November 1, 2017 2:10 PM
To: Hank Bounds <hbounds@nebraska.edu>
Cc: Pete Ricketts <pete.ricketts@nebraska.gov>; Tim Clare <tclare@nebraska.edu>; Howard Hawks <hhawks@nebraska.edu>; Jim Pillen <jpillen@nebraska.edu>; Bob Whitehouse <bwhitehouse@nebraska.edu>; Robert Schafer <rschafer@nebraska.edu>; Paul Kenney <pkenney@nebraska.edu>; Bob Phares <bphares@nebraska.edu>; Hal Daub <hdaub@nebraska.edu>; Ronnie Green <rgreen@unl.edu>; Jeffrey Gold <jeffrey.gold@unmc.edu>; o Kristensen <kristensend@unk.edu>
Subject: Re: Response to Recent Hastings Tribune Op-Ed

Hank,

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Sen. Matt Williams
District 36
402-471-2642
News.legislature.ne.gov/dist36/

On Oct 31, 2017, at 4:59 PM, Hank Bounds <hbounds@nebraska.edu> wrote:

Senators:

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Hank

Hank M. Bounds, Ph.D.
President, University of Nebraska
3835 Holdrege Street | Lincoln, NE 68583-0745
402.472.8636 | hbounds@nebraska.edu
[@hankbounds](#)

From: Hank Bounds
Sent: Tuesday, October 31, 2017 4:09 PM
To: Steve Halloran; serdman@leg.ne.gov; Tom Brewer
Subject: Response to Recent Hastings Tribune Op-Ed

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was sent to media, even though senators have my cell phone number [REDACTED] and email address (hbounds@nebraska.edu). And when factors are misrepresented to the degree that they have been in this case, I'm going to speak up.

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I have some questions of my own.

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Even as we work to improve, here's what comes to mind for me when someone mentions the faculty and staff of the University of Nebraska.

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I think about the researchers whom you and I had a great conversation about,

Senator Brewer, whose work in defense is helping more of our men and women in uniform come home safely.

I think about the educators whose personal attention to our young people, many of whom are the first in their families to attend college, helps 11,000 of them cross the finish line every year.

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I think about thousands of stories of teaching, research, and services to the people of Nebraska that aren't being told because we're still talking about an isolated incident that is being used to advance a political agenda.

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I'm asking you to join my colleagues and I at the University of Nebraska in advancing the Governor's goal to grow our state for the future. The next generation is watching.

Sincerely,

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Hank M. Bounds, Ph.D.

President, University of Nebraska

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402.472.8636 | hbounds@nebraska.edu

@hankbounds

<Senators letter 2017-10-31.pdf>

<5 questions for UNL _ Opinion _ hastingstribune.pdf>

From: Mike Groene
To: [Hank Bounds](#)
Cc: [Pete Ricketts](#); [Tim Clare](#); [Howard Hawks](#); [Jim Pillen](#); [Bob Whitehouse](#); [Robert Schafer](#); [Paul Kenney](#); [Bob Phares](#); [Hal Daub](#); [Ronnie Green](#); [Jeffrey Gold](#); [o Kristensen](#); [Steve Erdman](#); [Steve Halloran](#); [Tom Brewer](#)
Subject: University should welcome public debate
Date: Wednesday, November 1, 2017 7:51:53 AM

Mr. Bounds,

Your reply to Senators Erdman, Halloran and Brewer emphasizes what many believe to be the issue with the University of Nebraska; an obsession with research and a lack of attention to the core college education for our youth.

The University's leadership should pursue the values of the society that created it and pays for it. You have a distortion of that philosophy in the mindset of your English department. You had an opportunity to "Fix It" instead you have decided to defend it and attempt to cover it up.

To correct you on your description of the University's place in a free-market system. A University's activity is a by-product of the free market it does not create the opportunities which a free-market generates through economic activities.

Instead of bemoaning the discourse created by the public letter the Senators sent to a newspaper, one would think you would cherish the opportunity for the public debate. Am I wrong to believe that one of the primary rationals for a society to create a university is to protect and encourage the free and open discussion of ideas. Have we strayed from that tenet?

I had hope that Mr. Green and yourself, with your rural upbringing, would have the strength to defend Nebraska's core values through support of solid instruction offered to students within the university's classrooms and stand against the national epidemic of nihilistic thought being introduced by radical professors in our university systems. Instead you either agree with the philosophy of your English department or have allowed yourself to be bullied by the radicals in the academic world.

Finally, talking down to state senators in an attempt to bully them is not wise. You will lose the fight.

Senator Mike Groene

On Tue, Oct 31, 2017 at 4:59 PM, Hank Bounds <hbounds@nebraska.edu> wrote:

Senators:

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Hank

Hank M. Bounds, Ph.D.
President, University of Nebraska
3835 Holdrege Street | Lincoln, NE 68583-0745
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[@hankbounds](#)

From: Hank Bounds

Sent: Tuesday, October 31, 2017 4:09 PM

To: Steve Halloran; serdman@leg.ne.gov; Tom Brewer

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Sincerely,

Hank

Hank M. Bounds, Ph.D.

President, University of Nebraska

3835 Holdrege Street | Lincoln, NE 68583-0745

402.472.8636 | hbounds@nebraska.edu

@hankbounds

Response to Recent Hastings Tribune Op-Ed

Hank Bounds

Tue 10/31/2017 4:09 PM

Sent Items

To: Steve Halloran <shalloran@leg.ne.gov>; serdman@leg.ne.gov <serdman@leg.ne.gov>; Tom Brewer <tbrewer@leg.ne.gov>;

Bcc: Philip Bakken <pbakken@nebraska.edu>; Melissa Lee <melissalee@nebraska.edu>;

📎 1 attachments (127 KB)

Senators letter 2017-10-31.pdf;

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President, University of Nebraska

3835 Holdrege Street | Lincoln, NE 68583-0745

402.472.8636 | hbounds@nebraska.edu

[@hankbounds](#)

October 31, 2017

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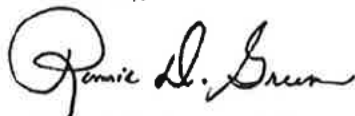
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Thanks for your service to Nebraska.

Sincerely,



Ronnie D. Green, Ph.D.
Chancellor

c: Hank Bounds, President, University of Nebraska
Donde Plowman, UNL Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Academic Officer
Laurie Bellows, UNL Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
Bob Whitehouse, Chair, University of Nebraska Board of Regents

From: Ronnie Green
To: serdman@leg.ne.gov; tbrewer@leg.ne.gov; shalloran@leg.ne.gov
Cc: [Hank Bounds](#); [Teresa Paulsen](#); [Kim Rauscher](#); [Donde Plowman](#); [Laurie Bellows](#); [Bob Whitehouse](#)
Subject: Attached Letter
Date: Tuesday, October 31, 2017 3:21:26 PM
Attachments: [Senators letter 2017-10-31.pdf](#)
[image005.png](#)
Importance: High

Senators Halloran, Erdman, and Brewer-

Please find attached a letter in response to your recent letter appearing in the Hastings Tribune. I hope that this is helpful in clearing up what appears to be considerable inaccurate information regarding this matter.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have further questions.

It is my understanding that you will receive a separate communication from University of Nebraska President Hank Bounds.

Best regards-



Ronnie D. Green, Ph.D.
Chancellor



University of Nebraska-Lincoln

201 Canfield Administration
Lincoln, Nebraska 68583
(402) 472-2116
rgreen@unl.edu
@RonnieDGreen

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Laurie Bellows, UNL Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
Bob Whitehouse, Chair, University of Nebraska Board of Regents

From: Bob Krist <bkrist@leg.ne.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, October 31, 2017 5:55 PM
To: Hank Bounds
Cc: Pete Ricketts;Tim Clare;Howard Hawks;Jim Pillen;Bob Whitehouse;Robert Schafer;Paul Kenney;Bob Phares;Hal Daub;Ronald D Green;Jeffrey P Gold;Douglas A. Kristensen;Steve Halloran;Tom Brewer;Steve Erdman
Subject: Re: Fw: Response to Recent Hastings Tribune Op-Ed

Thanks President Bounds,

I have little respect for the tactics of the three Senators involved in this "co-signed" piece. I am not surprised with Senator Halloran... true to form!!!

I am surprised at Senators Brewer and Erdman...and if they HAD communicated their issues before the piece, I might have more respect and understanding, as well as made my comments private to them and you. But, they have spoken openly so my questions/comments will be the same.

I echo your question..."to what end"???

I can only surmise these "NEW" Senators have not learned there "PLACE" and functionality within their new profound duties and responsibilities to their constituents and their office. They now have a direct link to you and the hierarchy within the state structures. They are no longer confined to grandstanding...unless that is their intent...which appears to be their style here.

In addition, I believe they are following the false and absent leadership from a Governor who fosters the mistrust of the University of Nebraska prevalent during the past three years.

I remain a fervent supporter of you and the University. Keep up the good work, and know these are only 3 of the 49.

Respectfully,

Senator Bob Krist

On Tue, Oct 31, 2017 at 4:59 PM, Hank Bounds <hbounds@nebraska.edu> wrote:

Senators:

Below is my email to Senators Halloran, Erdman, and Brewer in response to their Op-Ed in the Hastings Tribune. A copy of the Op-Ed and Chancellor Green's response are also attached for your reference.

Hank

Hank M. Bounds, Ph.D.

President, University of Nebraska

3835 Holdrege Street | Lincoln, NE 68583-0745

402.472.8636 | hbounds@nebraska.edu

@hankbounds

From: Hank Bounds

Sent: Tuesday, October 31, 2017 4:09 PM

To: Steve Halloran; serdman@leg.ne.gov; Tom Brewer

Subject: Response to Recent Hastings Tribune Op-Ed

Dear Senators Halloran, Erdman, and Brewer:

Recently you co-signed an opinion piece questioning the University of Nebraska's campus climate and the character of its leadership.

I don't relish the prospect of a public dispute with members of the Legislature. Unfortunately, no one contacted me to discuss your questions before the piece was sent to media, even though senators have my cell phone number [REDACTED] and email address (hbounds@nebraska.edu). And when factors are misrepresented to the degree that they have been in this case, I'm going to speak up.

Chancellor Green has provided you a detailed review of the facts surrounding the incident that took place almost 10 weeks ago at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. His letter is attached for your reference. I fully agree with it.

I have some questions of my own.

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Tue 10/31/2017 4:59 PM

Sent Items

To: Hank Bounds <hbounds@nebraska.edu>;

Cc: Pete Ricketts <pete.ricketts@nebraska.gov>; Tim Clare <tclare@nebraska.edu>; Howard Hawks <hhawks@nebraska.edu>; Jim Pillen <jpillen@nebraska.edu>; Bob Whitehouse <bwhitehouse@nebraska.edu>; Robert Schafer <rschafer@nebraska.edu>; Paul Kenney <pkenney@nebraska.edu>; Bob Phares <bphares@nebraska.edu>; Hal Daub <hdaub@nebraska.edu>; Ronald D Green <rgreen@unl.edu>; Jeffrey P Gold <jeffrey.gold@unmc.edu>; Douglas A. Kristensen <kristensend@unk.edu>;

Bcc: Philip Bakken <pbakken@nebraska.edu>; Melissa Lee <melissalee@nebraska.edu>; Joni Albrecht <jalbrecht@leg.ne.gov>; Roy Baker <rbaker@leg.ne.gov>; Carol Blood <cblood@leg.ne.gov>; Kate Bolz <kbolz@leg.ne.gov>; Bruce Bostelman <bbostelman@leg.ne.gov>; Lydia Brasch <lbrasch@leg.ne.gov>; Tom Brewer <tbrewer@leg.ne.gov>; Tom Briese <tbriese@leg.ne.gov>; cgrandberry@leg.ne.gov <cgrandberry@leg.ne.gov>; Clements, Robert <rclements@leg.ne.gov>; Sue Crawford <scrawford@leg.ne.gov>; Laura Ebke <lebke@leg.ne.gov>; Steve Erdman <serdman@leg.ne.gov>; Curt Friesen <cfriesen@leg.ne.gov>; sgeist@leg.ne.gov <sgeist@leg.ne.gov>; Mike Groene <mgroene@leg.ne.gov>; Steve Halloran <shalloran@leg.ne.gov>; Matt Hansen <mhansen@leg.ne.gov>; Burke Harr <bharr@leg.ne.gov>; Mike Hilgers <mhilgers@leg.ne.gov>; Robert Hiikemann <rhiikemann@leg.ne.gov>; Sara Howard <showard@leg.ne.gov>; Dan Hughes <dhughes@leg.ne.gov>; Rick Kolowski <rkolowski@leg.ne.gov>; Mark Kolterman <mkolterman@leg.ne.gov>; Bob Krist <bkrist@leg.ne.gov>; John Kuehn <jkuehn@leg.ne.gov>; Tyson Larson <tlarson@leg.ne.gov>; Brett Lindstrom <blindstrom@leg.ne.gov>; Lou Ann Linehan <llinehan@leg.ne.gov>; John Lowe, Sr. <jlowe@leg.ne.gov>; John McCollister <jmccollister@leg.ne.gov>; Mike McDonnell <mmcdonnell@leg.ne.gov>; Adam Morfeld <amorfeld@leg.ne.gov>; John Murante <jmurante@leg.ne.gov>; Patty Pansing Brooks <ppansingbrooks@leg.ne.gov>; Dan Quick <dquick@leg.ne.gov>; Merv Riepe <mriepe@leg.ne.gov>; Jim Scheer <jscheer@leg.ne.gov>; Paul Schumacher <pschumacher@leg.ne.gov>; Jim Smith <jsmith@leg.ne.gov>; John Stinner <jstinner@leg.ne.gov>; Theresa Thibodeau <tthibodeau@leg.ne.gov>; Tony Vargas <tvargas@leg.ne.gov>; Lynne Walz <lwalz@leg.ne.gov>; Dan Watermeier <dwatermeier@leg.ne.gov>; Justin Wayne <jwayne@leg.ne.gov>; Matt Williams <mwilliams@leg.ne.gov>; Anna Wishart <awishart@leg.ne.gov>;

2 attachments (168 KB)

Senators letter 2017-10-31.pdf; 5 questions for UNL _ Opinion _ hastingstribune.pdf;

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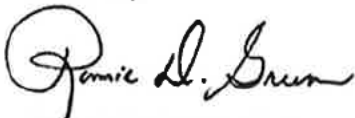
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Laurie Bellows, UNL Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
Bob Whitehouse, Chair, University of Nebraska Board of Regents

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5 questions for UNL

Sen. Steve Halloran of Hastings, Sen. Steve Erdman of Bayard, Sen. Tom Brewer of Gordon Oct 30, 2017 Updated 22 hrs ago

We have some questions concerning the University of Nebraska. We have come into these questions because of recent developments with UNL sophomore student and Turning Point USA recruiter, Kaitlyn Mullen.

Question No. 1: Are professors at UNL hostile toward conservative students? On Aug. 25 English Department graduate assistant Courtney Lawton protested in front of Kaitlyn Mullen's recruitment table for Turning Point USA with a sign, labeling her as a neo-fascist and verbally assaulting her as a "Becky," a racist term for sexually loose white women. UNL English Professor Amanda Gailey also protested against Mullen with a sign, demanding her name be added to Turning Point USA's professor watch list. Meanwhile, another unknown employee of the university asked Mullen to move her table to a "free speech zone."

Question No. 2: Are university administrators warm, welcoming, inviting and transparent towards conservative students? UNL Chancellor Ronnie Green conducted a full-scale investigation of the Aug. 25 incident and set up a meeting to report the university's findings to Mullen on Oct. 23. Chancellor Green asked Mullen to meet privately with him and his staff and that no recording of the session would be permitted. Mullen was asked to meet with the chancellor, Executive Vice Chancellor, Donde Plowman, Interim Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs Laurie Bellows, and Chief of Staff William Nunez. That's a ratio of four college administrators to one undergraduate student. Feeling outnumbered and intimidated, Mullen insisted on bringing her own attorney to the meeting.

Question No. 3: Can the university's administration conduct an honest investigation when a conservative student is involved? During the Oct. 23 meeting, it was reported to Mullen that no disciplinary action whatsoever had been taken against Gailey and Lawton. Furthermore, the chancellor Green played a video tape of the incident to Mullen, which was mysteriously missing a 10-minute interval when, according to Mullen, Gailey had protested against her with a sign. Green's explanation for the missing segment was that the camera suddenly stopped filming in that particular location and jumped to another area of the campus.

Question No. 4 Can anyone at the university tell the truth about free speech zones on campus? In August university spokesman Steve Smith told the Daily Nebraskan, UNL's student newspaper, that the "free speech zone" is "the space between the Nebraska Union and the Canfield Administration Building." He later retracted his statement. When University President Hank Bounds was interviewed by Coby Mach on Sept. 25 on KLIN radio, he denied the existence of any "free speech zones" on campus. However, the chancellor during the Oct. 23 meeting that the "free speech zone" was for visitors to the campus, such as street preachers.

Question No. 5: Does anyone teach English anymore at UNL? The homepage for the English Department at UNL, advertises its core values as: 1) Pursuing social justice, 2) Affirming diversity, 3) Engaging with a broad array of real and imagined communities based on empathetic understanding, 4) Fostering a sense of belonging, and 5) Instilling a desire for civic engagement. Strangely missing from these core values are traditional English department words such as "classic literature studies," "writing," "poetry," "fiction," "grammar," and "novel." Instead, the English department at UNL proudly displays several political posters in the department. One such poster says, "Nothing in this country can mean anything without admitting it was founded on betrayal." The English department has proudly condemned President Trump's executive order to suspend immigrant travel and it has recently reiterated its support for the LGBTQA community. When asked if he was aware of the contents of the English department's webpage, the chancellor said he was unaware of it. Most disturbing, though, is the fact that the English department's webpage is missing anything which even remotely resembles a traditional English education.

As you can see, as state senators we have justifiable reasons to be concerned about the social condition and discriminatory actions of our state's flagship university.

