

From: Marco Barker
Sent: Monday, July 19, 2021 2:17 PM
To: Ronnie Green; Michael Zeleny
Cc: Deb Fiddelke
Subject: Fwd: Regent Pillen's Resolution on Critical Race Theory

FYI

From: UNL AAUP [Redacted]
Reply-To: "[Redacted]"
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 at 9:41 AM
To: Kwame Dawes <kdawes4@unl.edu>
Subject: Regent Pillen's Resolution on Critical Race Theory

Non-NU Email

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Dear AAUP members and friends:

Governor Ricketts recently announced via social media that Regent Pillen will bring a proclamation before the Nebraska University Board of Regents to oppose the teaching of “Critical Race Theory.” The UNL Chapter of AAUP opposes any such motion and calls on the Board of Regents to dismiss it.

[We encourage you to contact Board President Kenny to express your concern about this clear academic freedom violation.](#)

The AAUP’s 1915 Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure, one of the foundational documents in the long and respected tradition of academic freedom in American higher education, begins with a discussion of the trust reposed in university Boards of Trustees or Regents. Noting that all boards of trustees should understand the centrality of academic freedom to the execution of the public trust they hold by virtue of their position, the Declaration warns against a failure to uphold this standard. It quotes then President of Harvard University, Charles William Eliot:

In the institutions of higher education the board of trustees is the body on whose discretion, good feeling, and experience the securing of academic freedom now depends. There are boards which leave nothing to be desired in these respects; but there are also numerous bodies that have everything to learn with regard to academic freedom. These barbarous boards exercise an arbitrary power of dismissal. They exclude from the teachings of the university unpopular or dangerous subjects . . . all too frequently, in both state and endowed institutions, they fail to treat the members of the teaching staff with that high consideration to which their functions entitle them. (1915 Declaration, 294)

The Nebraska University Board of Regents has committed itself in its bylaws and policies to a strict adherence to the principle of academic freedom, “pledg[ing] support of, and direct[ing] all segments of the University community to sustain and follow the . . . principles of academic freedom.” These principles require all researchers and teachers in the Nebraska university system to pursue the truths of their discipline using the most advanced approaches to the best of their professional skills, and to communicate their findings and those of their colleagues to their students. The Regents assert that this right and responsibility of the faculty, “to search for truth, to support a position the searcher believes is the truth, and to disagree with others whose intellect reaches a different conclusion,” is “the fiber of America’s greatness. It is, likewise, the strength of a great University, and its preservation is vital” (BOR Bylaws 4.2).

The recent claim by Governor Ricketts that Regent Pillen will bring a proclamation before the Board of Regents to oppose the teaching of certain material—any material—by NU faculty is therefore deeply concerning. To do so in the name of promoting “inclusive and honest dialogue and education” is craven political sophistry. The recent

politicized attacks on the teaching of Critical Race Theory display a poor understanding of this diverse body of scholarly material by politicians who claim to know it well enough to represent it to the public. Their claims are disrespectful to faculty experts, who sincerely seek to promote the common good via their research and teaching. That one of the University of Nebraska's own Regents plans to make such a claim and use his position of public trust to undermine the integrity of the university's mission in direct contradiction to the Board's own bylaws, rather than to safeguard it, is profoundly upsetting. Perhaps, the Governor was mistaken in his Twitter post and misrepresented Regent Pillen's stance? If not, we call on the Board of Regents to call this violation of its own bylaws by its name and take the appropriate action warranted by such a violation.

The AAUP chapter at UNL salutes colleagues in the Institute of Ethnic Studies and all other faculty who conduct research and teach, with courage and integrity, at the cutting edge of their disciplines. This also includes Chancellor Green's Council on Inclusive Excellence and Diversity, charged to play a central role in our institution's "journey toward addressing anti-racism and racial equity." Our colleagues often attract the criticism and even vilification of politicians and members of the public because their research, by definition, pushes the bounds of our knowledge beyond the comfortable status quo. While such attacks by public officials are regrettable, it remains the responsibility of the faculty to disregard the political winds of the moment, and instead to remain dedicated to our society overall, to history, and to the advancement of human knowledge. As the Board of Regents Bylaws reminds us, this is our obligation and our responsibility. And it is the responsibility of the Board of Regents to respect and to protect this mission, one that we expect each Regent, regardless of other commitments and aspirations, to take seriously and fulfill.

Below is an email that you can send to Chairman Kenney, President Carter, and Chancellor Green. We encourage you to reach out to them about this vitally important issue.

[Send an email to Chairman Kenney, President Carter, and Chancellor Green:](#)

In solidarity,
AAUP



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