

Dear Colleagues,

In March, the University retained outside experts to conduct an independent investigation of our University Foundations (UF) 200 classes. The review began after a series of concerns were raised regarding UF 200, culminating in an alarming allegation of abuse of a student. Such conduct would violate not only our own [Statement of Shared Values](#) and governing Board Policy on [Academic Freedom and Responsibility](#), but certainly norms on our campus and in higher education more generally.

The investigation, which reached out to thousands of students and included dozens of direct in-depth interviews and a review of hundreds of documents, is now complete, and the outside firm has issued its final report to me. The firm concluded that there were no violations of university policies nor was there evidence of attempts to indoctrinate our students.

To protect the integrity of the process, while the investigation was ongoing, we avoided comment or actions that might lend the appearance of influencing the outcome. I deeply regret that the lack of information during this time may have caused some distress for faculty, staff, and students. We are pleased to know that there were no policy violations, and we recognize that, in the new climate facing our nation today, we must ensure that we are responsive and thoughtful moving forward and that our students understand, with clarity, that we teach them *how* to think, not *what* to think.

The original complaints regarding UF 200 came forward in a time of pitched national and political tension regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts and the role of higher education. Our students had spoken at the State Capitol, expressing their concerns, and critics of higher education had publicly advised students to record their classes. New legislation appeared across the country. In Florida, new [legislation](#) permits students to record academic classes “in connection with a complaint to the public institution of higher education ... or as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding.” Members of our campus community will have varied perceptions of these efforts. Some will see them as productive; others will view them as destructive.

When the difficult decision was made to suspend all UF 200 classes for a week in mid-March, we were aware of several facts. First, our faculty have trained to teach in an environment of good faith, presuming that students attend classes with a goal of learning, challenging themselves and others, and engaging in dialogue and debate. Second, our faculty, as a body, have as their aim, the education and growth of our students. Third, in this moment in our nation, much that was previously not imagined to be political has become politicized and often polarizing. Finally, we must adhere to and support the Shared Values we all hold dear.

Our own state legislature recently passed [HB 377](#), “Dignity and Nondiscrimination in Public Education,” which applies to all public institutions in the state. The General Counsels from the state’s public universities and the State Board of Education are working together now to develop a clear understanding of this new legislation. Our General Counsel has already met with our UF

200 faculty, and we will provide written guidance to all of our faculty as soon as it is available. This guidance will necessarily evolve as we see the legislation interpreted. We will also remain in compliance with the requirements of our accrediting body, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, and with the professional associations that review and accredit our programs of study.

The University’s goal, and that of our faculty and staff, is to provide the highest quality education and to serve each and every student. Our students, their intellectual growth, and their wellbeing, are the central reasons that the conversations taking place right now are so vitally important. Students will be called upon to meet learning objectives of their classes and their curriculum, but they are not obliged to share the values and opinions of the authors they read or the faculty who teach them. We ask our students and members of our community to meet us in good faith as we do the important work of preparing people for careers and lives beyond the university.

Significantly, people across the political spectrum are often seeking the same thing—a free expression and exchange of ideas—and fear the same thing, the loss of that free expression and exchange of ideas.

The best response to these concerns is our Board of Trustees’ and University’s adherence to Board Policy on Academic Freedom and Responsibility and our commitment to our own Statement of Shared Values. We must continue to make clear our commitment to these guiding policies and “treat people with dignity regardless of who they are and what they believe.” While it may be uncomfortable for people to have others express disagreement with their ideas or interpretations, our students, faculty, and staff have every right to express their disagreements respectfully. We, as a community, are committed to this. In the unfortunate event that a student believes that he or she has been mistreated or discriminated against in an academic setting, we have policies in place that allow them to express concerns and to file an [academic grievance](#) or to allege violations of the University’s [nondiscrimination and anti-harassment policy](#).

The obligation to inform and educate all faculty, staff and students of our policies and procedures rests with University leadership, and we will do more in the months ahead to this end.

At Boise State, we have always worked to innovate, learn, create, and grow, even in tremendously challenging times. With a clear focus on our students and meaningful dialogue, we will do so now. Our new Institute for the Advancement of American Values embodies this aim of bringing us together to listen, learn, and engage in meaningful dialogue; to lift up freedom of expression and thought; to build a model for a community that, whatever our differences, positively impacts the state and the world beyond.

Sincerely,
Dr. Marlene Tromp
President