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AMERICAN COUNCIL OF
TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI

Anne D. Neal
President

March 21, 2008

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Mr. Howard E. Cosgrove
Chairman
NRG Energy, Inc.
211 Carnegie Center
Princeton, NJ 08540-6213

Jerry L. Martin
Chairman

Dear Mr. Cosgrove:

I write on behalf of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, a non-partisan, non-profit, educational organization dedicated to academic freedom, accountability, and excellence in higher education. Our network includes alumni and trustees from institutions across the country, including the University of Delaware.

Lynne V. Cheney
Chairman Emeritus

We have been following with deep concern the ongoing controversy surrounding the Office of Residence Life's residential "curriculum." As you may be aware, this curriculum included diversity training for Resident Advisors that equated any type of European ancestry with white supremacy and required RAs to rate residents based on their commitment to such views of "diversity."

Richard D. Lamm
Vice Chairman

It seemed that in November this problem had been laid to rest when UD president Patrick T. Harker announced the termination of the curriculum—after it prompted a national uproar.

However, in light of recent events, it appears that administrators have not gotten the message and that serious problems of "mind control" will not go away.

President Harker published an open letter in December (enclosed) promising, "By next fall, we are committed to having in place a residential life program...that will support the intellectual, cultural and ethical development of our students."

However, when the Office of Residence Life announced a new program on January 29, it fell so far short of meeting those goals that the faculty rejected it because of its alarming resemblance to the program previously condemned.

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Recent recommendations regarding program revisions raise further concerns. In a February 22 report, the Faculty Senate's Student Life Committee suggests calling any new plan a "program" rather than a curriculum, involving faculty much more closely, and avoiding posting residence life materials online. These proposals seem designed to avoid embarrassing incidents caused by public exposure without addressing the underlying issue of ideologically-loaded program content.

In its public statements, its policies, and on its website, UD has consistently pledged its commitment to respect "the rights of its students, visitors and other members of the University community." As a public university, it is also legally bound to respect the First Amendment.

But actions speak louder than words. UD's recent history demonstrates how administrators are failing to protect students' freedom of conscience and speech and, indeed, are undermining it. And it seems time for the Board to take thoughtful action.

Under the guise of an educational residence program, UD administrators have, in fact, put into place a program that essentially attempts to adjudicate which viewpoints are acceptable—and which are not. The Residence Life program is striking in its politically-correct nature and almost Orwellian in its concept of what should happen to students in their residence halls. The fact that faculty have only been marginally consulted raises additional concerns.

Indeed, given the ideological nature of the two previous Residence Life programs—and the clear challenges administrators are encountering in developing one that instructs rather than indoctrinates—we urge the Board to demand that development of any new program be put on hold indefinitely.

It is simply impossible to understand why a Residence Life program of this kind is really necessary or how it would comport with UD's long and proud history of academic freedom and integrity. While the concept of education in the residence hall is noble, it should not be pursued at the expense of the free exchange of ideas when there are surely better ways to advance students' intellectual, cultural, and ethical development.

In consultation with trustees, faculty and administrators across the country, ACTA published the enclosed report, *Intellectual Diversity: Time for Action*, which describes how administrators can ensure the integrity of students' educational experience and the free exchange of ideas on campus.

Its recommendations include conducting an institutional self-study to assess the current state of intellectual diversity on campus and to identify areas for improvement; incorporating intellectual diversity into institutional statements and activities on diversity; encouraging balanced panels and speaker series; and eliminating speech codes. Other boards have already taken actions along these lines.

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In 2006, the Academic Standards Committee of the State University of New York Board of Trustees conducted a serious review of the state of the free exchange of ideas. The trustees invited four college presidents from within their system, as well as faculty and students, to address intellectual diversity and academic freedom on campus as a precursor to possible board action.

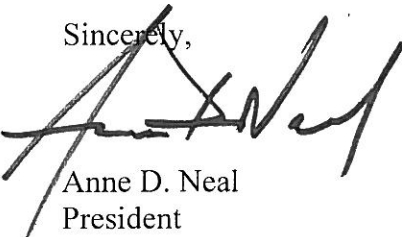
In 2007, the South Dakota Board of Regents began to require all professors to include an “Academic Freedom Statement” on their course syllabi. It reminds students that their “academic performance may be evaluated solely on an academic basis, not on opinions or conduct in matters unrelated to academic standards.” It also tells students that they “should be free to take reasoned exception to the data or views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion” and names the administrator who is to help them if their rights are denied.

The City University of New York Board of Trustees and the University of Missouri Board of Curators have also taken action—in consultation with the administration—to protect the free exchange of ideas on campus.

Given the fundamental value of freedom of conscience and free speech at the University of Delaware, it is essential for the Board of Trustees to ensure that such a gross violation of academic freedom and First Amendment rights never occurs again. Stopping the development of a new Residence Life program and undertaking a thoughtful assessment of the atmosphere on campus and alternatives to such a program would go far in reassuring students, parents, and taxpayers of the Board’s commitment to the institution’s educational mission.

We welcome the opportunity for further discussion and await word of your plans to address this serious matter.

Sincerely,



Anne D. Neal
President

Enclosures

cc: Board of Trustees, University of Delaware
Greg Lukianoff, President, Foundation for Individual Rights in Education