



ACTA
AMERICAN COUNCIL OF
TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI

December 14, 2009

Mr. Clyde E. Allen, Jr.
318 44th Ave. South
Moorhead, MN 56560

Re: University of Minnesota

Dear Mr. Allen:

Administrators at the University of Minnesota recently received a letter about urgent freedom of conscience and First Amendment issues related to the ongoing reassessment of the College of Education and Human Development's teacher education program. We wanted to make certain you are aware of this crucial matter, since it goes to the heart of what higher education is about—and poses a real threat to your university's reputation. Indeed, the controversy has already made headlines in a range of local and national publications.

The referenced letter (enclosed) is from the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, a respected free-speech organization based in Philadelphia. It presents convincing evidence that if teacher education on the Twin Cities campus is redesigned according to a recent proposal from the Teacher Education Redesign Initiative's Race, Culture, Class, and Gender Task Group, prospective teachers will be compelled to adopt certain viewpoints on controversial issues. No matter how well-intended the proposal might be, this is clearly unacceptable.

As a public university, the University of Minnesota is bound by the First Amendment. And the Board of Regents is responsible for ensuring that the university complies with this obligation. But as outlined in the attached letter, the proposed teacher education redesign would be inimical to the First Amendment and the robust exchange of ideas, not to mention contrary to the professional norms of scholarly inquiry on which academic freedom and autonomy are premised.

At a time of reported shortages of teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to address the challenges in K-12, it is surely troubling that some at the University of Minnesota apparently seek to promote standards that, in practice, ignore academic goals and lead to a politicized determination of who is qualified to be a teacher. You and your fellow regents should ensure that no part of the teacher education program threatens students' First Amendment rights or freedom of conscience.

PROMOTING ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND EXCELLENCE

1726 M Street, NW, Suite 802 Washington, DC 20036
T (202) 467-6787; (888) ALUMNI-8 F (202) 467-6784 info@goacta.org www.goacta.org

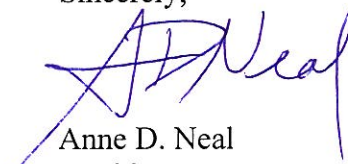
Mr. Clyde E. Allen, Jr.
December 14, 2009
Page Two

We also encourage you to undertake other actions to enrich the intellectual experience of all students. The enclosed trustee guide, *Protecting the Free Exchange of Ideas*, catalogues best practices from numerous institutions in this regard.

Simply put, it is up to you and your fellow regents, as fiduciaries, to see that the University of Minnesota does everything possible to guarantee the free exchange of ideas. Students, faculty, and the taxpayers who support your public institution depend upon you.

The American Council of Trustees and Alumni is an independent, nonprofit, educational organization with a network of more than 10,000 college and university trustees around the country. We thank you for your service to American higher education and would welcome the opportunity to assist you in any way we can. We look forward to hearing from you on how you will address this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Anne D. Neal
President

Enclosures

cc: Linda A. Cohen, vice chair, University of Minnesota Board of Regents
Anthony R. Baraga, member, University of Minnesota Board of Regents
Richard B. Beeson, member, University of Minnesota Board of Regents
Dallas Bohnsack, member, University of Minnesota Board of Regents
John Frobenius, member, University of Minnesota Board of Regents
Venora M. Hung, member, University of Minnesota Board of Regents
Steven D. Hunter, member, University of Minnesota Board of Regents
Dean E. Johnson, member, University of Minnesota Board of Regents
David M. Larson, member, University of Minnesota Board of Regents
Maureen Ramirez, member, University of Minnesota Board of Regents
Patricia S. Simmons, member, University of Minnesota Board of Regents
Ann D. Cieslak, secretary, University of Minnesota Board of Regents
Greg Lukianoff, president, Foundation for Individual Rights in Education