



“State Universities Must Be Viewpoint Neutral”

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

12 April 2018

Oregon state universities and colleges must remain neutral with respect to the broad variety of reasonable and civic viewpoints espoused by Oregonians, the Oregon Association of Scholars said today.

There is an urgent need for state colleges and universities, as well as their private counterparts, to reaffirm the fundamental principle of viewpoint neutrality in higher education in an era when faculty and administration often seek to institutionalize their own viewpoints and suppress others, the Association said.

“Oregon colleges and universities violate the trust that the public has placed in them when they use their authority to promote certain viewpoints and discourage others,” said Dr. Bruce Gilley, President of the Oregon Association of Scholars and a Professor of Political Science at Portland State University.

Gilley was commenting following a spate of events and policy changes at Oregon state colleges and universities during the current academic year that violate viewpoint neutrality. These include.

- University of Oregon’s Faculty Senate passed a motion supporting the student-led disruption and cancellation of an address by the university president in October 2017 on grounds that the faculty supported the political objectives of the students.
- Portland State University administrators organized and promoted a “counter-panel” of female science and engineering faculty in February 2018 to precede a panel organized by other faculty, without university support, featuring the fired Google engineer James Damore.
- Oregon State University initiated mandatory political indoctrination for all undergraduate and graduate students under its “Social Justice Education Initiative.” Students are being taught that Oregon history is nothing but a tale of oppression; that political power should be used to impose “comparable outcomes” for every social identity group; that calling the United States a “melting pot” where “everyone can succeed if they work hard” constitutes an unacceptable example of so-called “micro-aggression”; that criticism of left-wing social justice ideology constitutes prohibited discrimination; and that students

who voted for or support the current U.S. president are part of Oregon's "white supremacy or neo-Nazi" movement.

- Public events and speakers at all public universities and colleges in the state continue to be grossly unrepresentative of the viewpoints and perspectives of all Oregonians. For instance, Oregon State University did not sponsor a single event between January and April 2018 reflecting classical liberal or conservative viewpoints, while sponsoring 15 events with a radical left or left-liberal viewpoints, including "The Origins of Today's Billionaire-Funded Radical Right", "Stopping Fascism Today", and "Wages for Housework and #MeToo", according to a survey of *OSU Today* listings by the Oregon Association of Scholars.

Both legal and academic principles have insisted that universities should not be partisan institutions, both because they receive public funds and extensive subsidies and because their mission requires wide freedoms for a diversity of viewpoints. "To perform its mission in the society, a university must sustain an extraordinary environment of freedom of inquiry and maintain its independence from political fashions, passions, and pressures," noted the University of Chicago's seminal 1967 Kalven Committee on the role of the university in political issues. More recently, the former Provost of Stanford University, John Etchemendy, told the university's trustees in 2017: "The university is not a megaphone to amplify this or that political view, and when it does it violates a core mission. Universities must remain open forums for contentious debate, and they cannot do so while officially espousing one side of that debate."

While it is normally the role of faculty to uphold academic freedom and maintain viewpoint neutrality, it is often the faculty who prompt their institutions to take sides politically, the Oregon Association of Scholars said.

"Oregon legislators should take action to strengthen accountability at public colleges and universities for upholding viewpoint neutrality and to protect students from mandatory political indoctrination and abuse," Gilley said.

ENDS

Contact: Dr. Bruce Gilley, President, Oregon Association of Scholars, gilleyb@pdx.edu, 503.725.3056

www.oregonscholars.org and www.nas.org