



DAVID CRAIG

STATE SENATOR

October 10, 2019

Chancellor Rebecca Blank
Office of the Chancellor
161 Bascom Hall
500 Lincoln Drive
Madison, WI 53706

RE: Student Free Speech and Safety Concerns

Dear Chancellor Blank,

I am writing to you today regarding a very troubling event that took place this past Wednesday on your campus and which has been widely reported in local and online media.

As reported by the Wisconsin State Journal, a UW-Madison student was video-taped defacing the windows of the UW-Madison College Republicans' office on campus with demeaning signs containing highly-charged, visceral language which were seemingly meant to intimidate and cause a disturbance. Additionally, the student engaging in this behavior was doing so while blaring a song on her phone entitled "FDT" (F*** Donald Trump) by rapper YG which, in addition to explicit language, contain inferences towards the harming of the President of the United States.

Further, according to the Wisconsin State Journal article reporting the matter, when a university employee approached the student requesting that she please stop, the student replied with an expletive and aggressive language and refused to stop. The article continues, "Two female students were in the office during the duration of the [events] and Christens said they feared for their safety, afraid to leave because of the demonstrator's aggressive behavior."

As a result of these events, I am requesting a thorough investigation into this matter by you, the UW's Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards, and the UW Police Department. Additionally, I request that you provide me – consistent with all laws and regulations - with a complete report as to the process UW will be using to investigate and respond, findings from the investigation, including any disciplinary actions resulting therefrom, as well as any modifications and/or clarifications to UW's campus free speech policy and any anti-intimidation and anti-harassment policy.

I understand that the UW System Board of Regents is set to act on its three-strike free speech policy adopted back in 2017 with the consideration of a scope statement as the policy moves through the Administrative Rulemaking process. Notwithstanding this policy prohibiting the use

of a “heckler’s veto” by students to stifle free speech, the actions of the student above go far beyond the realm of a “heckler’s veto” and more closely reflects direct intimidation against a particular group of individuals who hold a differing perspective – a perspective which is constitutionally protected by the 1st Amendment and ought to be protected by UW System policy.

While freedom of speech and expression is a pillar of higher education, speech and acts intended to intimidate have no place at any UW system campus and cannot be tolerated - nor should they be, whether done on the UW-Madison Campus or anywhere else. UW’s seeming unwillingness to address acts of intimidation against conservatives is of great concern and the UW is duty-bound to address the issues and provide assurances to the legislature and the people of Wisconsin that these activities will no longer be tolerated. Without action to address these concerns, the free speech and freedom of expression rights of UW students will continue to recede.

Based on my conversations with numerous constituents and families with ties to UW-Madison, there seems to be a growing animosity on that campus towards conservative thought and conservative expression while the opposing view is shielded, protected, supported, and encouraged. There is no shortage of leftist ideology permeating from campus organizations, faculty and staff, and directly from curricula which has fostered an environment which stifles the sharing of conservative view points in the classroom for fear of backlash for one’s beliefs. This is the very antithesis of free speech – the essence of *The Wisconsin Idea*.

As an alumnus of the University System and representative of the 28th Senate District - which sends numerous students to your campus each year - I am very interested in the issue of free speech on UW campuses. I am sure you agree with me that it is imperative that UW-Madison acknowledge the difference between free speech, freedom of expression, and civil discourse versus repugnant verbal and physical intimidation during this incident, which as you know, are not protected by the 1st Amendment and specifically prohibited by state law and UW-Madison campus’ rules on free speech.

Thank you in advance for consideration of my concerns over this very important and relevant matter and for your timely response.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Craig". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a stylized "C".

David Craig
State Senator
28th District

Cc: University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents