



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Rep. Emerson Statement on Colleges and Universities Committee Hearing

MADISON – Today, the Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities held an informational hearing on the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire campus. This was the second in a series of informational hearings focused on campus free speech and diversity of thought. Representative Jodi Emerson (D-Eau Claire) who serves as the ranking member on the committee issued the following statement in response:

“Today’s hearing, which only included testifiers invited to participate by the Republican majority, focused largely on intellectual and political debates on college campuses that concerned the comfort of students in expressing closely held views that may be controversial rather than instances of violations to the rights of students to speech protected from government intervention and censorship.

“I was proud to have this committee on the campus of UW-EC today to learn more about the survey that was done last fall and what that means for campuses across the state. I want to applaud those members of the UWEC faculty and staff who had a part in making sure this survey was fair and the questions were balanced. We know that pieces of surveys and polls can often be viewed through a narrow lens to understand only a portion, but those involved in developing this survey went to great lengths to make sure it would be as honest and fair as possible.

“As the Committee on Colleges and Universities continues to discuss issues of intellectual diversity and freedom of speech and expression on college campuses throughout Wisconsin, I hope we in the Legislature have the courage to commit to and listen to the voices of those with whom we disagree. We need to lead by example.

“If we are going to have a real discussion about this issue, we need to include the Student Senate, current professors, and staff. Wisconsin has an incredible shared governance model and that needs to be reflected in these hearings.

“I’ve heard some of my GOP colleagues complain that campuses are too far left. But they only have themselves to blame for losing ground on college campuses. It’s not indoctrination, but the Republican agenda, that turns off many young people. Students want clean water, access to reproductive healthcare and a learning environment free from gun violence. The Republican Party is not supplying that for students.

“As Wisconsin considers proposed legislation that mirrors restrictions across the country that criminalize drag performances and ban books related to race, gender, and sexuality, I hope continued discussions in the Assembly regarding intellectual diversity will include the voices of marginalized Wisconsinites who have a great deal to contribute to our understanding of censorship, discrimination, and freedom of speech and expression.”

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