



July 21, 2021

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Dr. Ronnie D. Green, Chancellor
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
201 Canfield Administration Building South
Lincoln, Nebraska 68588-0419

Dear Chancellor Green:

I am writing on behalf of the national office of the American Association of University Professors concerning Governor Pete Rickett's recent announcement that the University of Nebraska board of regents will vote at its August 2021 meeting on a resolution that would prohibit "any imposition of critical race theory in [the] curriculum" of the institutions in the state university system.

As you are aware, the AAUP has long promoted the basic principles of academic freedom articulated in the enclosed 1940 *Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure*, a document jointly formulated by the AAUP and the Association of American Colleges and Universities and endorsed by more than 250 scholarly and professional societies. These principles recognize that colleges and universities "are conducted for the common good," which "depends upon the free search for truth and its free exposition." To serve that mission, institutions of higher learning must ensure that their faculty members are "entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject," including subjects that are contested and controversial.

As you are also aware, our Association placed the University of Nebraska-Lincoln on its list of censured administrations following a 2018 AAUP investigation of the summary dismissal of Ms. Courtney Lawton, a graduate lecturer in English. Since then, the AAUP's staff has worked with UNL administration and faculty to remove the censure and has welcomed the considerable progress the university has recently made toward that end. The staff was especially encouraged by the board of regents' April 2021 amendment of its bylaws that addressed issues of academic due process that Ms. Lawton's case revealed. Unfortunately, the regents' proposed resolution puts these efforts in jeopardy.

As a final step in censure removal, the AAUP's staff arranges for a faculty member with no prior involvement in the case to interview members of the institution's administration and faculty to ascertain whether the campus climate for academic

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freedom is sound. The virtual site visit to your campus began June 29, 2021, when the AAUP representative met with you and Executive Vice Chancellor Spiller. Our staff had anticipated that the visit would conclude this month, preparing the way for potential censure removal at the AAUP Council meeting this November.

However, if the regents adopt the proposed resolution, it is inconceivable that the AAUP's Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure would recommend lifting the censure. An institution whose governing board dictates the subjects that its faculty members may or may not address in their classrooms fails to honor the basic tenets of academic freedom that enable institutions of higher learning to seek the truth and promote the common good.

As a result, the AAUP has suspended the virtual site visit at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln pending the regents' action. We hope that the board of regents will demonstrate the University of Nebraska's commitment to academic freedom by declining to adopt the critical race theory resolution. If the board does so, we would anticipate resuming the virtual site visit as soon as possible.

I encourage you to contact me with any questions, concerns, or updates you have on this matter. I sincerely hope we can soon resume our efforts to lift the censure at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

Sincerely,



Mark Criley

Senior Program Officer

Department of Academic Freedom, Tenure, and Governance

Enclosure by email attachment

Cc: Mr. Walter E. Carter, Jr., President, University of Nebraska
Dr. Elizabeth Spiller, Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Professor Steve Kolbe, President, Faculty Senate
Professor E. Wesley F. Peterson, Chair, Academic Rights and Responsibilities
Committee
Professor Matt Cohen, President, University of Nebraska–Lincoln AAUP Chapter
Professor Patricia Wonch Hill, President, Nebraska Conference of the AAUP