

We three Nebraska State Senators, Sen. Steve Erdman (LD47), Sen. Tom Brewer (LD43), and Sen. Steve Halloran (LD33), have some questions concerning the University of Nebraska. We have come into these questions because of recent developments with UNL Sophomore student and Turning Point USA recruiter, Kaitlyn Mullen.

Question #1: Are professors at UNL hostile towards conservative students? On August 25 English Department graduate assistant, Courtney Lawton, protested in front of Kaitlyn Mullen's recruitment table for Turning Point USA with a sign, labelling her as a Neo-Fascist and verbally assaulting her as a "Becky," a racist term for sexually loose white women. English professor Amanda Gailey also protested against Ms. Mullen with a sign, demanding her name be added to Turning Point USA's professor watch list. Meanwhile, another unknown employee of the University asked Ms. Mullen to move her table to a "free speech zone."

Question #2: Are university administrators warm, welcoming, inviting and transparent towards conservative students? University Chancellor, Ronnie Green, conducted a full-scale investigation of the August 25 incident and set up a meeting to report the University's findings to Ms. Mullen on Monday, October 23. Chancellor Green asked Ms. Mullen to meet privately with him and his staff and that no recording of the session would be permitted. Ms. Mullen was asked to meet with Chancellor Ronnie Green, Executive Vice Chancellor, Donde Plowman, Interim Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, Laurie Bellows, and Chief of Staff, William Nunez. That's a ratio of four college administrators to one undergraduate student. Feeling outnumbered and intimidated, Ms. Mullen insisted on bringing her own attorney to the meeting.

Question #3: Can the university's administration conduct an honest investigation when a conservative student is involved? During the October 23 meeting, it was reported to Ms. Mullen that no disciplinary action whatsoever had been taken against English professor, Amanda Gailey, and teaching assistant, Courtney Lawton. Furthermore, Chancellor Green played a video tape of the incident to Ms. Mullen, which was mysteriously missing a ten minute interval when, according to Ms. Mullen, Professor Amanda Gailey had protested against her with a sign. Chancellor Green's explanation for the missing segment was that the camera suddenly stopped filming in that particular location and jumped to another area of the campus.

Question #4: Can anyone at the University tell the truth about free speech zones on campus? Back in August University Spokesman, Steve Smith, told the Daily Nebraskan, UNL's student newspaper, that the "free speech zone" is "the space between the Nebraska Union and the Canfield Administration Building." He later retracted his statement. When University President Hank Bounds was interviewed by Coby Mach on September 25 on KLIN radio, he denied the existence of any "free speech zones" on campus. However, Chancellor Ronnie Green told Ms. Mullen during the October 23 meeting that the "free speech zone" was for visitors to the campus, such as street preachers.

Question #5: Does anyone teach English anymore at UNL? The homepage for the English Department at UNL, <https://www.unl.edu/english/home>, advertises its core values as: 1) Pursuing social justice, 2) affirming diversity, 3) Engaging with a broad array of real and imagined communities based on empathetic understanding, 4) fostering a sense of belonging, and 5) Instilling a desire for civic engagement. Strangely missing from these core values are traditional English department words such as 'classic literature studies,' 'writing,' 'poetry,' 'fiction,' 'grammar,' and 'novel.' Instead, the English department at UNL proudly displays several political posters in the department. One such poster says,

“Nothing in this country can mean anything without admitting it was founded on betrayal.” The English department has proudly condemned President Trump’s executive order to suspend immigrant travel and it has recently reiterated its support for the LGBTQA community:

<https://www.unl.edu/english/department-messages#20170224>. When asked if he was aware of the contents of the English department’s webpage, Chancellor Ronnie Green said he was unaware of it. Most disturbing, though, is the fact that the English department’s webpage is missing anything which even remotely resembles a traditional English education.

As you can see, as Nebraska State Senators we have justifiable reasons to be concerned about the social condition and discriminatory actions of our State’s flagship university.