

OREGON ASSOCIATION OF SCHOLARS



21 September 2016

Dear Colleague,

I write to you as newly-elected head of the Oregon affiliate of the National Association of Scholars (www.nas.org). The NAS is a 2,500-member national group that brings together academic professionals as well as members of the public who are concerned about the politicization and ideological narrowing of higher education in America.

In its summary document of 2015, “The Architecture of Intellectual Freedom”, the NAS recalls the 1915 declaration of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) that the university should be a place free from “intemperate partisanship” where faculty avoid “indoctrinating” students with their opinions. The role of the university is to foster a place of excellence, opportunity, and social virtues built around the discovery and communication of knowledge and truth based on shared standards of justification. Yet for the past half century, specifically since the feckless response to the “Port Huron Statement” of radical students in 1962 demanding that universities should be centers of partisan political activism, this promise of higher education has been in decline.

In our state of Oregon, the creeping politicization and polarization of our university campuses has been abetted by a steadily homogenizing faculty that lacks any real pluralism of views (whatever its superficial “identities”) and by a growing university bureaucracy that for ideological or career reasons implicitly advances partisan political purposes through committees, “diversocrats”, and university communications.

What is to be done? Our intention is to offer informed, compassionate, and thoughtful voices in higher education in the state we love. NAS is distinguished by its rigorous, scholarly, and carefully-scrutinized reports on a wide range of subjects. Our Oregon chapter would join other NAS affiliates throughout the country led by scholars with an abiding interest in the ideal of the university as a non-partisan center of excellence and opportunity. The president of NAS, Peter Wood (whose own introductory letter I attach here) and his team encourage the affiliates to develop their own priorities and to tackle their own issues.

My invitation to you is to help me to shape a distinctive Oregon Association of Scholars agenda. Please join (nas.org/join) or contact me to talk about this. I look forward to hearing from you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B Gilley", written over a horizontal line.

Bruce Gilley
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