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Oregon Academics Issue Freedom Pledge



Oregon Academic Faculty Pledge on Freedom

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Media Contact: Dr. Bruce Gilley, info@oregonscholars.org

A group of faculty at Oregon colleges and universities today issued the “Oregon Academic Faculty Pledge on Freedom” in response to a rising tide of illiberal and harmful assaults on higher education. The five-point pledge commits the scholars to upholding freedoms on campus, combatting pervasive ideological impositions, and ensuring that teaching and research are guided only by the search for truth and scientific excellence.

“Growing intolerance for political and intellectual diversity at colleges and universities nationwide is a grave threat to higher education,” noted Dr. Bruce Gilley, president of the Oregon Association of Scholars and one of the founding signatories of the pledge. “This initiative offers an alternative that brings higher education back to its fundamentals.”

Gilley said the scholars hoped that their pledge would be copied by academics in other U.S. states. “Sometimes, action at the state level is more meaningful and effective,” he noted.

The pledge is open to all academic faculty at Oregon colleges and universities, Gilley noted. Their names and positions are public. They may sign at: <https://forms.gle/hr7sQ6QikPY6nLnr9>

The full text of the pledge and the names of founding signatories are as follows:

OREGON ACADEMIC FACULTY PLEDGE ON FREEDOM

The undersigned faculty at Oregon colleges and universities (the undersigned) affirm their commitment to an open and pluralistic American society and the constitutional order on which it is founded.

Recent national events have brought out competing perspectives and ideas concerning American social and political life. That is the essence of a free society. However, the use of violence or intimidation is not acceptable in a democracy. We are concerned about the rise of an intolerant national climate in which disagreement is met with rage, riots, and cancel culture.

First, we oppose the segmentation and essentializing of American individuals into group identities based on immutable characteristics or social markers. Every American citizen is free and equal before the law, deserves to be treated as an individual and not according to a group stereotype, and has attendant rights and responsibilities. WE UNDERTAKE to treat our students first and foremost as individuals not as categories. WE UNDERTAKE to offer our students views of the American public that go beyond fixed and immutable group identities and include approaches rooted in individualism, reason, and open-mindedness.

Second, America is one of the freest and most prosperous nations in the world because it has long held fast to the principles of a free society. As educators, we believe it is imperative to teach students why these values matter. WE UNDERTAKE to redouble efforts to encourage our students to learn about and engage these fundamental American principles.

Third, for too long we have been complacent about the narrowing scope for free speech on campus and the dramatic disappearance of political diversity among faculty and staff. This has baleful consequences for the quality of education and for democratic institutions. WE UNDERTAKE to make explicit attempts to redress the lack of intellectual diversity in our departments, and we will challenge campus mono-culture with a boisterous intellectual diversity that reflects the ideas in American society.

Fourth, the university is a public institution that must be neutral with respect to competing ideas of public policy and political ideology. When a public institution is beholden to a particular ideology or worldview, it erodes public trust. WE UNDERTAKE to oppose and refrain from efforts to institutionalize any particular ideology in our curriculum, programs, administration, or admissions procedures.

Finally, the university is a place for the creation and communication of the best human knowledge. WE UNDERTAKE to deliver course material that challenges students with the best evidence-based, scientific, and methodologically rigorous research. We will choose

our readings, our faculty, and our research citations with respect to substantive indicators of scholarly excellence and merit. In short, we pledge to give our students value for money: to meet their expectations that when they walk into a classroom, they will encounter the most rigorous research and the most challenging arguments that equip them to flourish in a free, democratic, and pluralistic society.

We undertake to do these things as a matter of professionalism and conscience.

David E. Williams, Environmental and Molecular Toxicology, Oregon State University

Peter Boghossian, Philosophy Department, Portland State University

N. Christopher Phillips, Mathematics, University of Oregon

Darrell Lim, Physical Science, Portland Community College

Michael Trigoboff, Computer Science, Portland Community College

Bruce Gilley, Department of Political Science, Portland State University

Michael Weingrad, Judaic Studies, Portland State University

Further Information

The Oregon Association of Scholars is the Oregon affiliate of the National Association of Scholars. Visit NAS at www.nas.org, and OAS at www.oregonscholars.org. Contact: Dr. Bruce Gilley, OAS President, info@oregonscholars.org