



July 11, 2019

Dr. Alan Cureton
Office of the President
University of Northwestern
Riley Hall 1413
3003 Snelling Avenue North
St. Paul, Minnesota 55113

Sent via U.S. Mail and Electronic Mail (alancureton@unwsp.edu)

Dear President Cureton:

FIRE¹ is in receipt of your cursory response to our letter of June 13, 2019.

Your response consists of one sentence acknowledging that you have “read” FIRE’s letter. We interpret your choice not to dispute any of the letter’s facts or arguments as a tacit acknowledgment that our understanding of events is accurate, particularly in light of your view that it is “important to us to set the record straight and ensure our values are not being misrepresented.”²

These values presumably include the free speech promises the University of Northwestern made to its students.³ The gravity of these values—important to both UNW’s accreditation⁴ and its reputation—makes your silence all the more troubling, particularly while you publicly

¹ As you will recall, the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to defending liberty, freedom of speech, due process, academic freedom, legal equality, and freedom of conscience on America’s college campuses.

² UNIV. OF NORTHWESTERN, *President’s Statement*, June 5, 2019, <https://unwsp.edu/news/university-of-northwestern-st-paul-official-statement>.

³ See, e.g., UNIV. OF NORTHWESTERN, *Community Policies, UNW Political Campaign Policy*, <https://confluence.unwsp.edu/display/UN/UNW+Political+Campaign+Policy>.

⁴ HIGHER LEARNING COMM’N, *CRITERIA FOR ACCREDITATION* (rev. June 2014), *available at* <https://www.hlcommission.org/Policies/criteria-and-core-components.html>.

claim a desire to meet the issue head-on.⁵ We can only conclude that you do not intend to take steps to remedy the situation at hand or ensure that no future violations occur.

The university's silence in response to private efforts to address this issue is all the more troubling in light of its retention of a public relations firm to defend its reputation. Superficial public relations tactics will not address the cause of the damage to the university's reputation—its violation of its students' expressive rights.

FIRE remains willing to work with your administration to preserve its students' expressive rights when it is ready to take them seriously.

Regards,



Zachary Greenberg
Program Officer, Individual Rights Defense Program

KS/zg

⁵ *President's Statement, supra* note 2 (“We’re not making excuses. We’re not trying to dodge the issue.”)