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**RHODE ISLAND  
COLLEGE**

February 15, 2005

President

Mr. David French  
Foundation for Individual Rights in Education  
210 West Washington Square, Suite 303  
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Re: Your Letter of January 28, 2005

Dear Mr. French:

I have just returned from a trip out-of-state conducting college business with a number of our alumni. Hence my delay in responding to your fax regarding Mr. Felkner.

As you know, state and federal law limits my ability to discuss with you issues pertaining to individual students. However, please be advised that no student has been punished, academically or otherwise, for failing to hold or take a particular social or political belief. If you have been informed otherwise, you have been misinformed. Moreover, no student has been obliged to lobby for a particular cause before the General Assembly. Again, if you have been informed otherwise, you have been misinformed. To the best of my knowledge, no Rhode Island College student has been censored or had his/her freedom of expression limited. As part of the educational process in social science courses, students are routinely asked, in written and oral class exercises, to argue points of view with which they personally may not agree. Students are also often placed in teams and are directed to work cooperatively in analyzing issues. This is a widely recognized pedagogical practice that helps students learn to analyze, to understand, to articulate, and to persuade.

The M.S.W. degree curriculum includes a two-course sequence that teaches students about influencing social policy through legislation. During the first of these two courses, individual students are free to choose both a topic and a particular position (pro or con) around which an advocacy plan is developed and presented in class. In the second semester, students are required to engage in a lobbying exercise. The purpose of this assignment is to provide an experiential learning opportunity that continues the development of their advocacy skills. Many students choose to fulfill this requirement by continuing the work begun on the issue and position addressed during the first semester's assignment. However, students may choose a different topic; neither their advocacy topic nor position are prescribed by the school or the instructor.

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Mr. David French  
February 15, 2005  
Page 2

The College has consistently sought to take deliberate actions to sustain an appropriate and productive teaching/learning environment, and to ensure that the constitutional rights of all campus personnel are appropriately recognized, valued, and protected. We consider the maintenance of a spirited and open intellectual community to be a hallmark of this College and we will continue our efforts to maintain such an environment. Furthermore, we will maintain our efforts to ensure that all members of the College community enjoy the full privilege of their fundamental rights. To this end we will continue to be vigilant in the fair and appropriate application of College policies.

Very truly yours,



John Nazarian  
President

JN:jl