



## Foundation for Individual Rights in Education

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September 6, 2005

President V. Lane Rawlins  
Office of the President  
PO Box 641048  
Washington State University  
Pullman, Washington 99164-1048

Linda Chaplin  
Director of Student Services  
College of Education  
PO Box 642152  
Washington State University  
Pullman, Washington 99164-2152

### URGENT

Sent by U.S. Mail and Facsimile (509-335-0137, 509-335-4677)

Dear President Rawlins and Director Chaplin:

FIRE appreciates your quickly making clear that elementary education student Ed Swan will not be forced to sign an unconstitutional contract requiring that he hold certain beliefs to continue his enrollment in the teacher education program at Washington State's College of Education.

However, the mere fact that Swan was not required to sign the contract does not allay the concerns of either Swan or FIRE about Washington State's insistence on judging its education students based on their political beliefs. Indeed, Director Chaplin's letter of August 31, 2005, to Swan emphasized that Swan will still "be evaluated using the...Professional Dispositions Evaluation for Field Experiences." As discussed in our previous letter, both the Professional Dispositions Evaluation (PDE) form itself and, particularly, the College of Education's application of it to Swan violate the U.S. Constitution.

Put simply, Director Chaplin's letter made it clear that Swan will still be judged on the same bases that inspired Washington State professors and staffers to give Swan low marks for expressing negative opinions about the school's official version of diversity, for dismissing "white privilege" and "male privilege" as major problems, for expressing opposition to homosexual adoption, and for using the word "wetback" in a paper when describing what some Mexicans call recent

immigrants. One professor even begged Director Chaplin on the PDE evaluation to “find a way” to prevent Swan from becoming a teacher, despite describing him as “an excellent student apart from his comments and choices.” Swan was also required to attend a session of “professional development activity” with Assistant Vice President for Diversity and Equity Melynda Huskey—a session which Huskey’s own memorandum makes clear was more of an ideological inquisition than a developmental activity.

Please do not make Washington State University defend the indefensible. Neither the courts of law nor the court of public opinion will accept such a blatant attempt at ideological coercion at a state university—a university that is, of course, supported with the tax dollars of millions of citizens with many different political and ideological beliefs. Washington State has neither the moral nor the legal right to accept money from every taxpayer but restrict its programs to only those who agree with the prevailing political or ideological opinions of the university’s faculty or administration.

FIRE and Ed Swan request, therefore, that Washington State take immediate steps to dismantle its apparatus of ideological enforcement by ensuring that its evaluations of students meet with the requirements of the U.S. Constitution. Washington State must declare that it will not discriminate on the basis of viewpoint, remove Dispositions 6 and 7 from the School of Education’s PDE form, and discontinue using the student evaluations process as a vehicle for ideological or political discrimination against students like Ed Swan. Because of the urgent nature of this request due to the beginning of the semester, we request a response on this matter by Friday, September 9, 2005, at 5 p.m. Eastern time.

Sincerely,



Robert L. Shibley  
Program Manager

cc:

Robert C. Bates, Provost, Washington State University

Charlene K. Jaeger, Vice President for Student Affairs, Washington State University

Judy Mitchell, Dean, WSU College of Education

Edwin Helmstetter, Chair of Teaching & Learning Department, WSU College of Education

Melynda Huskey, Assistant Vice President for Equity and Diversity, WSU