

RESOLUTION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA FACULTY SENATE ON ITS CONFLICTS OF INTEREST POLICY

Whereas the University of Florida Board of Trustees, President, and Provost (collectively UF) has denied some faculty members' requests to engage in outside activities pursuant to its Conflict of Interests (COI) policy, and

Whereas six professors sued UF in the District Court for the Northern District of Florida claiming that the University's denial of their request to engage in outside activities violated their First Amendment rights to freedom of speech protected by the United States Constitution, and

Whereas a fact-finding committee of the University of Florida Faculty Senate reported numerous instances of external pressure being put on faculty in violation of UF's policy on academic freedom, and

Whereas UF is being investigated for violations of academic freedom of its faculty by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and by a Congressional subcommittee, and

Whereas lawyers for UF referred to the faculty in the lawsuit as "moonlighters," "traitors," "political hacks," and "disobedient liars,"¹ and

Whereas UF recognizes that "[i]n the development of knowledge, research endeavors, and creative activities, the faculty and student body must be free to cultivate a spirit of inquiry and scholarly criticism and to examine ideas in an atmosphere of freedom and confidence,"² and

Whereas UF pledges that "[t]he faculty must be free to engage in scholarly and creative activity and publish the results in a manner consistent with professional obligations,"³ and

Whereas the UF Faculty Senate passed a resolution on November 17, 2021 calling for an external evaluation of UF's COI policies that has not been acted upon ([11-17-21 FinalAcademicFreedomResolution.pdf \(ufl.edu\)](#)); and

Whereas Judge Mark Walker enjoined UF from enforcing its COI policy in regard to expert witnessing on the ground that the professors would likely succeed on the merits of their claim that the policy violated their First Amendment rights,

The Faculty Senate of the University of Florida hereby resolves:

1. That UF should discontinue its opposition to the decision handed down by Judge Mark Walker in the District Court for the Northern District of Florida,
2. That UF should empanel a committee of internal and external experts (as requested by the Faculty Senate in its resolution of 11/17/2021) to review the University's COI policy and provide guidance on how UF can incorporate professional and disciplinary organizations' best practices and standards in evaluations of conflicts of interest, and
3. That UF should refrain from disparaging any of its faculty and publicly reaffirm its faculty's duty to promulgate truth and knowledge for the benefit of the people of the State of Florida.

¹ Austin v. UF, et al., 1:21cv1840MW/CRJ Preliminary Injunction, at 30.

² UF Regulation 6C1-7.018(1)(a).

³ Id.