

RESOLUTION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA FACULTY SENATE ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Whereas The University of Florida BOT, President, and Provost (collectively UF) amended its Conflicts of Interest (COI) Policy without consultation with faculty in 2020 and, as a result of those changes, have denied faculty the right to engage in outside activities, and

Whereas six professors sued UF in the District Court for the Northern District of Florida claiming that enforcement of the amended COI policy 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 as a result of negative publicity surrounding the lawsuit and the Faculty Senate Committee's report, 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 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 Judge Mark Walker enjoined UF from enforcing amendments to its COI policy 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 instead of appealing the decision of the District Court for the Northern District of Florida, UF empanel a committee of external and internal experts on freedom of speech and academic freedom to develop a COI policy, review procedures, and regulations on academic freedom that are consistent with our peer and aspirational institutions and that protect the speech rights of faculty,
2. That UF reaffirm its commitment to academic freedom by empowering the faculty of the colleges and academic units to structure procedures of review and appeal within each unit that are guided by their professional and disciplinary organizations' best practices, and
3. That UF refrain from disparaging its faculty and publicly reaffirms 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.