



May 23, 2023

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**Action Item**

BOT - 3      Resolution in Support of Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression

**Background Information**

UNC Greensboro values and respects all members of the university community. The University considers freedom of speech and academic freedom basic rights for faculty, students, staff, and the extended community and essential to providing all who live, learn, and work at UNCG the opportunity to become active participants in an intellectually vibrant community that celebrates a broad range of ideas and perspectives.

The Board of Trustees shares this commitment, supports open dialogue, expression, and respectful exchange of ideas and viewpoints, and seeks to articulate the same as embodied in the Resolution set forth below.

**Attachment**

3.1 Resolution in Support of Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression

**Recommended Action**

That the Board of Trustees of The University of North Carolina at Greensboro adopt the Resolution in Support of Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression dated May 23, 2023.



*Resolution in Support of Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression  
May 23, 2023*

*WHEREAS, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro is dedicated to the transmission and advancement of knowledge and understanding and seeks to provide all who live, learn, and work at the University the opportunity to become active participants in an intellectually vibrant community that celebrates a broad range of ideas and perspectives. As with all UNC System Universities, the UNC Greensboro Board of Trustees recognizes that academic freedom is essential to achieving this purpose; that the mission of the University is the discovery, improvement, and dissemination of knowledge; that its domain of inquiry and scrutiny includes all aspects and all values of society; and*

*WHEREAS, the University of North Carolina System Board of Governors supports and encourages full freedom, within and as provided by the law, for faculty and students to engage in inquiry, discourse, teaching, learning, research, publication, discussion, and debate that is free from constraints, either from within or from outside the University, that would unreasonably restrict their academic endeavors; and*

*WHEREAS, the UNC Code acknowledges faculty and students share in the responsibility for maintaining an environment where academic freedom flourishes and where all members of the academic community are valued and respected.*

*WHEREAS, UNC Greensboro values and respects all members of the university community and broader society. The University supports and protects the right to academic freedom and freedom of expression, and its faculty, staff, and students are resolute in the preservation and protection of the same within the University, with this being the foundation of UNCG's purpose; and*

*WHEREAS, As a matter of policy, UNC Greensboro will not regulate free expression on the basis of content, whether we agree or disagree, except insofar as limitations on that freedom are necessary to the functioning of the University, are required by law, or are necessary to protect the health and safety of its community members.*

*WHEREAS, UNC Greensboro shares the view expressed in the University of Chicago's Kalven Committee Report on the University's Role in Political and Social Action (attached hereto as Attachment A) that freedom of speech and academic freedom are basic rights for the University's faculty, students, staff, and extended community.*

*WHEREAS, Out of respect for free inquiry and the obligation to cherish a diversity of viewpoints, UNC Greensboro will not express opinions on the political and social issues of the day. At the same time, UNC Greensboro acknowledges that in extraordinary circumstances, the University has a duty to speak to defend its mission and values.*

*THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: The UNC Greensboro Board of Trustees reaffirms its commitment to academic freedom and freedom of expression as embodied in its mission and purpose and the Code of the Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina. This Resolution is intended to complement, rather than impede, university policies around tenure and curriculum.*

Kalven Committee:  
Report on the University's Role in Political and Social Action

Report of a faculty committee, under the chairmanship of Harry Kalven, Jr. Committee appointed by President George W. Beadle. Report published in the Record, Vol. I, No. 1, November 11, 1967.

The Committee was appointed in February 1967 by President George W. Beadle and requested to prepare "a statement on the University's role in political and social action." The Committee conceives its function as principally that of providing a point of departure for discussion in the University community of this important question.

The Committee has reviewed the experience of the University in such matters as its participation in neighborhood redevelopment, its defense of academic freedom in the Broyles Bill inquiry of the 1940s and again in the Jenner Committee hearings of the early 1950s, its opposition to the Disclaimer Affidavit in the National Defense Education Act of 1958, its reappraisal of the criteria by which it rents the off-campus housing it owns, and its position on furnishing the rank of male students to Selective Service. In its own discussions, the Committee has found a deep consensus on the appropriate role of the university in political and social action. It senses some popular misconceptions about that role and wishes, therefore, simply to reaffirm a few old truths and a cherished tradition.

A university has a great and unique role to play in fostering the development of social and political values in a society. The role is defined by the distinctive mission of the university and defined too by the distinctive characteristics of the university as a community. It is a role for the long term.

The mission of the university is the discovery, improvement, and dissemination of knowledge. Its domain of inquiry and scrutiny includes all aspects and all values of society. A university faithful to its mission will provide enduring challenges to social values, policies, practices, and institutions. By design and by effect, it is the institution which creates discontent with the existing social arrangements and proposes new ones. In brief, a good university, like Socrates, will be upsetting.

The instrument of dissent and criticism is the individual faculty member or the individual student. The university is the home and sponsor of critics; it is not itself the critic. It is, to go back once again to the classic phrase, a community of scholars. To perform its mission in the society, a university must sustain an extraordinary environment of freedom of inquiry and maintain an independence from political fashions, passions, and pressures. A university, if it is to be true to its faith in intellectual inquiry, must embrace, be hospitable to, and encourage the widest diversity of views within its own community. It is a community but only for the limited, albeit great, purposes of teaching and research. It is not a club, it is not a trade association, it is not a lobby.

Since the university is a community only for these limited and distinctive purposes, it is a community which cannot take collective action on the issues of the day without endangering the conditions for its existence and effectiveness. There is no mechanism by which it can reach a collective position without inhibiting that full freedom of dissent on which it thrives. It cannot insist that all of its members favor a given view of social policy; if it takes collective action, therefore, it does so at the price of censuring any minority who do not agree with the view adopted. In brief, it is a community which cannot resort to majority vote to reach positions on public issues.

The neutrality of the university as an institution arises then not from a lack of courage nor out of indifference and insensitivity. It arises out of respect for free inquiry and the obligation to cherish a diversity of viewpoints. And this neutrality as an institution has its complement in the fullest freedom for its faculty and students as individuals to participate in political action and social protest. It finds its complement, too, in the obligation of the university to provide a forum for the most searching and candid discussion of public issues.

Moreover, the sources of power of a great university should not be misconceived. Its prestige and influence are based on integrity and intellectual competence; they are not based on the circumstance that it may be wealthy, may have political contacts, and may have influential friends.

From time to time instances will arise in which the society, or segments of it, threaten the very mission of the university and its values of free inquiry. In such a crisis, it becomes the obligation of the university as an institution to oppose such measures and actively to defend its interests and its values. There is another context in which questions as to the appropriate role of the university may possibly arise, situations involving university ownership of property, its receipt of funds, its awarding of honors, its membership in other organizations. Here, of necessity, the university, however it acts, must act as an institution in its corporate capacity. In the exceptional instance, these corporate activities of the university may appear so incompatible with paramount social values as to require careful assessment of the consequences.

These extraordinary instances apart, there emerges, as we see it, a heavy presumption against the university taking collective action or expressing opinions on the political and social issues of the day, or modifying its corporate activities to foster social or political values, however compelling and appealing they may be.

These are admittedly matters of large principle, and the application of principle to an individual case will not be easy.

It must always be appropriate, therefore, for faculty or students or administration to question, through existing channels such as the Committee of the Council or the Council, whether in light of these principles the University in particular circumstances is playing its proper role.

Our basic conviction is that a great university can perform greatly for the betterment of society. It should not, therefore, permit itself to be diverted from its mission into playing the role of a second-rate political force or influence.

Harry Kalven, Jr., *Chairman*

John Hope Franklin

Gwin J. Kolb

George Stigler

Jacob Getzels

Julian Goldsmith

Gilbert F. White

Special Comment by Mr. Stigler:

I agree with the report as drafted, except for the statements in the fifth paragraph from the end as to the role of the university when it is acting in its corporate capacity. As to this matter, I would prefer the statement in the following form:

The university when it acts in its corporate capacity as employer and property owner should, of course, conduct its affairs with honor. The university should not use these corporate activities to foster any moral or political values because such use of its facilities will impair its integrity as the home of intellectual freedom.