

April 22, 2019

Dear «Salutation»:

As I am sure you know, two times this year Portland State University's (PSU) campus security has allowed protesters to violate the rights of members of the campus community with disruptive and threatening behavior. It goes without saying that an institution of higher education fails in its duty to uphold the principles of academic freedom and free inquiry when it implicitly grants legitimacy to coercive action as a response to opinions that some part of the campus community might find unwelcome.

Portland State properly committed itself to the free exchange of ideas. The first paragraph of PSU's Code of Student Conduct clearly states that the University "supports the right of all people to live and learn in a safe and respectful environment that promotes the free and vigorous expression of ideas," and that "students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with these principles." Yet, when the University's commitment to these principles was tested, campus security twice capitulated to a heckler's veto rather than defend the values of integrity, respect, and inclusion underlined in PSU's mission statement.

It is the role and responsibility of the board to ensure that University staff protect and foster freedom of expression and inquiry. Indeed, a university must ensure its intellectual integrity as zealously as it protects the well-being of its students. If it does not take the necessary step of enforcing its Code of Student Conduct with vigilance, it cannot but expect that such disruptions will reoccur.

I respectfully ask the board to ensure that the administration enforces Code of Student Conduct Section XIV by sanctioning those involved in these disruptions. It is never pleasant to punish students, but unless the University takes action, it will send the message to the campus community that they are free to disobey university rules and shout down those they disagree with without consequence. Indeed, in video captured of the latest incident at the PSU College Republicans' meeting on March 5, one protester stated that the demonstration's explicit purpose was to "de-platform" the group—to prevent

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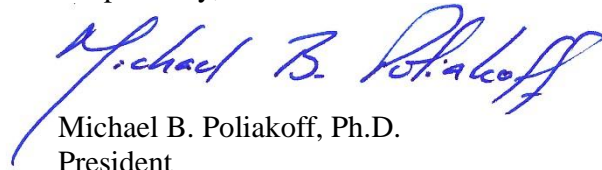
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them from speaking. Such tactics undermine the very foundation of collegiate learning, as much as—if not worse than—plagiarism or academic fraud.

In light of this event, I am taking the opportunity to send you a copy of our publications *Protecting the Free Exchange of Ideas: How Trustees Can Advance Intellectual Diversity on Campus*, and *Guarding the Freedom to Speak, Freedom to Hear*. The former describes practices that have proven to be successful in enriching the free exchange of ideas on campus, while the latter reviews the legal and ethical violations inherent in such practices as the “heckler’s veto” and “de-platforming.” I encourage you to use these resources as the basis for a candid board discussion about how best to ensure that disruption and coercion are not tolerated as substitutes for rational discourse at Portland State.

Thank you for your service to higher education, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael B. Poliakoff". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left and under the first part of the name.

Michael B. Poliakoff, Ph.D.
President

Enclosures

cc: Rahmat Shoureshi, Ph.D., president, Portland State University