



*Sent Via Email – September 7, 2016*

Dear Speaker Vos,

Thank you for your note below and your thoughts about how we can all work together to strengthen the UW System. I have worked much of my 40-year career outside of Wisconsin and knew of the UW System and the excellence it represented even as a young faculty member in Georgia.

We, too, are concerned about diversity of thought. If there is a place in our society where a rainbow of ideas, even unpopular ideas, are discussed and debated, it should be in our universities. This should go far beyond the speakers that come to campus. I will offer just two examples from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. The one-page attachment is taken from our strategic plan—A Partnership for Thriving Communities. I hope you will take a look at it. When you do you will see in the sidebar about diversity we have included “political perspective.” You will also see our commitment to academic freedom where both faculty and students have a right to express their views and ideas.

We also think about this issue when selecting those to honor. In our 122-year history this university has only awarded four honorary doctorates. The first went to Melvin R. Laird, the second to David Obey and the third and fourth to John and Patty Noel, whom I personally know as Independents. We have also inducted three individuals into the University Hall of Fame—Lee Sherman Dreyfus, Helen Godfrey and Dorothy Vallier. Presenting diverse perspectives matters at Point.

You may have noticed in reviewing the data from your records request that UW-Stevens Point spent an average of \$316 per speaker, an amount that often included travel expenses.

I would love to have a Distinguished Speakers series at UW-Stevens Point, as it would greatly enhance the educational experience of our students, but the recent budget reductions (\$9 million in the past four years) have made that impossible. However, your note has sparked an idea. If you provided segregated funding in the amount of \$50,000 per year to UW-Stevens Point, I know we could put together a distinguished speaker series worthy of an outstanding university—maybe a model for others to follow. If we failed to meet the spirit of your concerns, then the funding could always be pulled back. So I accept your challenge, and challenge you to help make possible the presentation of robust ideas from a series of diverse thought-leaders visiting our campus, fostering what could be a new page in our state’s history.

Bernie L. Patterson  
Chancellor  
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

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## Introduction

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The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point is a great university. Once a school for preparing teachers, we now educate students in a variety of fields and to meet a variety of needs in Central and Northern Wisconsin and beyond. We're proud of our broad, multi-disciplinary capabilities and continue to value broad-based education.

We recognize that to meet the challenges of the 21st century, UW-Stevens Point must become a new kind of public university: more engaged with area stakeholders, more responsive to local needs, and more relevant to solving regional problems. We seek to join with individuals, businesses, and other organizations throughout Central and Northern Wisconsin to build A Partnership for Thriving Communities to help our region stay vibrant, healthy, prosperous and sustainable.

Community engagement is integral to our heritage and our future. A Partnership for Thriving Communities—this strategic plan—will better focus our limited resources on our most promising opportunities. By acting with greater harmony, UW-Stevens Point will help ensure Central and Northern Wisconsin remains a great place to work, live, learn and thrive.

At the same time, we continue to honor the agility of individuals and units throughout our university and to protect the key virtue of academic freedom. This strategic plan values our right to pursue a variety of inquiries and endeavors, and to express our ideas, results and opinions. Similarly, we honor and perpetuate shared governance as one of UW-Stevens Point's most important strengths, as both students and employees have indispensable roles and essential rights and responsibilities in strategic decision-making.

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## Vision, Mission and Values

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Our vision, mission and values underlie all our work.

**Vision:** The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point will continue to be recognized for developing, supporting and educating students and citizens to constructively engage in local, regional and global communities.

**Mission:** Through the discovery, dissemination and application of knowledge, the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point fosters intellectual growth, provides a broad-based education, models community engagement and prepares students for success in a diverse and sustainable world.

**Values:** In addition to our primary value of education, we also value:

- Community engagement
- Critical thinking
- Diversity and inclusivity
- Lifelong learning
- Professional preparation
- Research, scholarly and creative activity
- Student-centered environment
- Sustainable management of natural resources and other resources

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### Diversity:

Differences in background, identity, ability and more; includes race/ethnicity, gender role and identity, age, religion, political perspective, sexual orientation, nontraditional student, veteran, disability, chronic illness, socioeconomic status, and more.

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**From:** Rep.Vos [<mailto:Rep.Vos@legis.wisconsin.gov>]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 06, 2016 3:15 PM  
**To:** Patterson, Bernie <[Bernie.Patterson@uwsp.edu](mailto:Bernie.Patterson@uwsp.edu)>  
**Subject:** Challenge to UW System



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# ROBIN J. VOS

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SPEAKER OF THE WISCONSIN STATE ASSEMBLY

September 6, 2016

Dear Chancellor Bernie Patterson,

I am writing to inform you of the challenge that I have put forth on the UW System and the Board of Regents at the beginning of this school year. A high priority should be placed on providing intellectual diversity on every college campus. The Board of Regents have agreed to a policy statement to affirm its commitment to academic freedom and freedom of expression. However, I am concerned with the possible lack of diverse opinions being provided on our campuses.

Over the course of this summer, my office has researched the invited speakers to the UW System who were paid with taxpayer dollars. From our review, we found a disturbing trend. Within the top 50 taxpayer-funded speakers, we identified less than a handful of conservatives. The data revealed a common practice throughout the system; when UW System officials look to invest in an invited guest, more times than not, they're looking for liberal-minded individuals.

Inviting speakers on campus present a great opportunity to grow the minds of students, but when the counterviews are absent from the discussion, there cannot be a debate.

As you well know, as a product of the UW System and a former student regent, I care immensely about the path our universities are headed. I would like to see this troubling issue corrected before our UW System schools get the reputation of being narrow minded and lacking in diversity of thought and ideas.

Please see the attached column detailing the Free Speech Challenge to the UW System.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Robin J. Vos  
Speaker of the Wisconsin State Assembly



# ROBIN J. VOS

SPEAKER OF THE WISCONSIN STATE ASSEMBLY

EMBARGOED UNTIL TUESDAY 12 a.m.

September 2, 2016

For more information contact:

Speaker Robin Vos: (608) 266-9171

Note to editors: The following is a column from Speaker Robin Vos that is embargoed until Tuesday morning.

## **A Free Speech Challenge to the UW System**

### *A Conservative's Call for Intellectual Diversity on Campus*

Nothing is more bittersweet than dropping off a child at college and nothing is more exciting than the start of a school year for students. The University of Wisconsin System has 180,000 students and possibly double the number of concerned family members who are entrusting their children to live on their own, oftentimes, for the very first time. Parents and students are also entrusting the schools to provide the very best education that will help open up opportunities for a good career or an advanced degree. But perhaps what could be most worrisome about going to college these days is the plague of political correctness that creates an environment that ends up stifling free speech and potentially damaging the minds of tomorrow.

Last December, the Board of Regents approved a policy statement to affirm its commitment to academic freedom and freedom of expression. The two-page statement says, "it is not the proper role of the university to attempt to shield individuals from ideas and opinions they, or others, find unwelcome, disagreeable, or even deeply offensive. Although the university greatly values civility, concerns about civility and mutual respect can never be used as a justification for closing off discussions of ideas." As the 2016-17 school year commences, I would like to challenge the UW System to practice what it preaches.

We took a closer look at the guest lecturers and speakers at our college campuses. My office obtained records from the UW System on the invited speakers at the four-year UW System schools in 2015 who were paid with taxpayer dollars. While not every university tracks this data the same way, we did our best to analyze the type of speaker, the amount spent and the person's possible ideology.

Our review found roughly \$2.7 million was spent on guest speakers in 2015. UW-Milwaukee spent more on speakers than any other school. Not surprisingly, a large number were easily identifiable as being liberal. The same was true with smaller schools. The largest amount paid for a single speaker was at UW-Platteville. [Kathy Ober](#), a former professor at University of Massachusetts, Amherst and co-founder of the [Social Justice Training Institute](#) spoke three times for a total of \$45,000. Michael Sam, the first openly gay player in the NFL, was one of the highest paid speakers for an individual speech at [UW-La Crosse last December](#). The UW System schools have invited actors, writers, musicians and even a local farmer to speak to students, each with a varying price tag to taxpayers.

What is noticeably absent in the top paid speakers to the UW System were individuals with conservative, political or social, perspectives. Within the top 50 taxpayer-funded guest speakers, we identified less than a handful of conservatives. Sure, there could be a plethora of conservatives who refused to accept any honoraria, but I doubt it. The data suggests that when UW System officials look to invest in an invited guest, more times than not, they're looking for a liberal-minded individual to disperse information to the young, developing minds who pay them thousands of dollars for their education.

Intellectual diversity should be a top priority on every college campus. Every view should be present, analyzed and discussed. However, we continue to see unsettling headlines around our country, "A Majority of Colleges Restrict Free Speech" and "Faculty Member Facing Loss of Tenure for Opinions on Blog." I'm pleased that the Board of Regents understands the need to protect the principle of free speech. But there can't be a debate when diverse perspectives aren't present. As our universities around the country grapple with today's politically correct culture, I challenge the UW System this school year to find more ways, beyond a two-page policy statement, to ensure that all perspectives, including conservative ones, are present in the classroom.

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