



October 13, 2017

Dear Chancellor Green, Vice Chancellor Plowman,

As the Graduate Student Assembly of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (GSA), we wish to register ongoing concerns that we have regarding the handling of the events of the 25th of August, 2017.

Without condemning or supporting the actions of the graduate student in question, we are concerned with the handling of the incident. In particular, we are concerned that external pressure led to fast-paced decisions not based on current university policy. While we are sympathetic to the many imperatives that the University faced in addressing this incident, the approach taken has raised doubts about the due process graduate and professional students can expect if accused of misconduct.

Due to the unique nature of graduate and professional study, many graduate and professional students are simultaneously students within the university and employees of the university. Currently, the separation between these two roles is unclear and the boundaries are blurred which leads to graduate and professional student vulnerability.

This uncertainty remains despite the recent, unilaterally updated "Guidelines for Good Practice in Graduate Education," in addition to the absence of information addressing this issue in the "Professional Conduct" section of the "Conduct, Academic Integrity, and Related Policy" within Graduate Student Policies. Important questions remain unanswered. Specifically:

- A. At what times and in what locations are graduate and professional students safe to protest and exercise their free speech rights? And when and where are graduate and professional students responsible for creating and maintaining a safe and positive learning environment?
- B. If a graduate or professional student is accused of violating the expectations placed upon them, what sort of due process can they expect?
- C. What role will graduate and professional students play in rigorously addressing the questions above?

Based on the information above, we request:

(1) *Clarification of disciplinary procedures and due process.* The August 25th event, as previously stated, left many graduate and professional students with a number of questions. Within the "Guidelines for Good Practice in Graduate Education", there are allusions to Graduate Student Role and Faculty Role in the section titled "Professionalism and Ethics". These guidelines, however, do not define when and where graduate and professional students are acting in their various capacities. The Graduate Student Policies do not directly address this issue either (as stated above) and leave graduate and professional students unable to refer to university policy regarding this issue. We request the "Professional Conduct" section be



updated to clearly define where and when we are working in which capacities and that these updates be made with input by the Graduate Student Assembly.

(2) *Affirmation of our Academic Freedom.* Many graduate and professional students will teach courses and conduct research during their time at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Academic freedom is imperative to our success. Academic freedom is defined by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) as the “indispensable requisite for unfettered teaching and research in institutions of higher education.” Restraining teaching and research hinders the academic community at the University by failing to provide a critical learning environment. We request the administration release a public statement in support of academic freedom, formally acknowledging its utility in academic discourse and affirming to graduate and professional students that they need not fear undue repercussions for exercising their academic freedom.

Please contact GSA President Karen Da Silva, Executive Vice-President Daniel Clausen, and Vice-President of Student Affairs Julia Reilly at gsa@unl.edu with any questions.

Respectfully,

Graduate Student Assembly of ASUN