



407 S. Dearborn St., Suite 701
Chicago, IL 60605
(312) 291-0396
center@campusspeech.org
www.campusspeech.org

November 13th, 2009

William E. Kirwin
Chancellor
The University System of Maryland
3300 Metzgerott Road
Adelphi, Maryland, 20783

re: University System of Maryland Policy On the Screening of Obscene Materials

Dear Chancellor Kirwin,

I am writing on behalf of the Center for Campus Free Speech to applaud your decision on Wednesday, November 11th, 2009 to reject a policy regulating the screening of films in the University of Maryland System. The Center is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting and protecting the marketplace of ideas at college campuses across the country. The Center for Campus Free Speech was created by a variety of members of the higher education community - students, faculty, administrators, and others - to protect and to promote free speech on campuses. The Center acts as a clearinghouse of information, provides specialized support to campuses, and connects concerned educators, administrators, lawyers and students into a national network.

The University of Maryland states that its mission is to “advance knowledge and nourish a climate of intellectual growth,” and this sentiment is echoed at each of the University System of Maryland’s campuses. Part of that mission is fulfilled in classrooms, lecture halls and laboratories. But the discussions that spark student learning don’t end in the classroom. A large part of the University’s “climate of intellectual growth” is furthered by the opportunities students provide for one another through their events, organizations and activities. Whether they consist of inviting a speaker, petitioning for a cause, or screening a film, student-run activities make up a great part of the “community of learning” the University System is so proud of. The Board of Regents made the right decision in refusing to adopt a policy that could have had negative implications on a wide variety of campus events.

Faculty, students and administrators at USM’s peer institutions from Berkeley to Chapel Hill share these values. Had the University System of Maryland adopted this policy they would have stood alone as the only public institution in the nation to restrict student events in this way. By refusing to adopt this policy the Board of Regents has ensured that students in the University System of Maryland have the same opportunities as their peers at every other public institution in the nation.

Last Wednesday the Board sent a strong message that they would not let the First Amendment, academic freedom and the University's very mission be subordinated to a political agenda. We understand that these decisions are not always easy, especially given the current shortfalls of Higher Education funding nationwide. We applaud the Board for making the right decision, even in difficult circumstances. The Center will continue to work to protect the diverse marketplace of ideas on all of Maryland's campuses.

If you have any questions, or we can render any additional assistance please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Adam Gaya
Program Director
Center for Campus Free Speech