

Rep. Shankland: Republican So-called “Campus Free Speech” Bill

Posted on Tuesday, Aug 13, 2019

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Likely To Do Just The Opposite

MADISON – Today, Republican lawmakers introduced legislation directing the University Of Wisconsin System Board Of Regents to establish a system-wide disciplinary policy for anyone under an institution’s jurisdiction found to have engaged in conduct which disrupts the free expression of others. The bill also prohibits UW institutions from weighing in on public policy controversies of the day and establishes a “three strike” rule culminating in expulsion for individuals found to be in violation of the new policy.

Rep. Katrina Shankland (D-Stevens Point) released the following statement in response:

“As the ranking member of the Assembly Colleges and Universities Committee, I’m extremely concerned about Republican legislation that would supersede or nullify the Board of Regents’ already problematic campus speech policy and replace it with an even more chilling policy. Under this bill, individuals could bring action and sue for damages if they are protested or potentially interrupted. Anyone could report another person for violating this new policy, and an individual could be suspended or expelled after just a few allegations, an investigation, and a hearing.

“I’m especially concerned about the far-reaching impact this legislation could have on freedom of speech on campus. Language in the bill stating that “institutions must remain neutral on public policy controversies” is overly broad and can be

construed as preventing campus leaders from taking positions on human and civil rights, at a time when our world most needs leaders to take a stand. How this bill would reach constitutional muster is a mystery. It's enormously disappointing to see this zeal for misleading rhetoric about so-called campus free speech when we could and should be working together to invest in our UW System and make higher education more affordable for everyone in Wisconsin."