



ROBIN J. VOS

SPEAKER OF THE WISCONSIN STATE ASSEMBLY

November 16, 2021

Chancellor Rebecca Blank
163 Bascom Hall
500 Lincoln Drive
Madison, WI 53706

DELIVERED ELECTRONICALLY

Chancellor Blank,

Our university system is a place to encourage and cultivate diversity of thought. Instead, it appears to have turned its back on the values of intellectual diversity and the discussion of differing viewpoints. It is unacceptable that the University of Wisconsin – Madison requires graduate students to take a mandatory class that instills the university's negative opinion of white students and the idea that students should feel guilty simply because of their race.

It has been brought to my attention that under the guise of violence prevention, UW-Madison has allowed its University Health Services division to push their own political beliefs and agenda on its graduate students through a mandatory "Graduate and Professional Students Preventing and Responding to Sexual and Relationship Violence" course. Students are not only required to take this course and pass with a 100% score in order to enroll in classes but they are also required to agree that whiteness means privilege.

The course states that Critical Race Theory and Critical Race Feminism can help students understand privilege better and "how a regime of white supremacy and its subordination of people of color have been created and maintained in America... not merely to understand the vexed bond between law and racial power but to change it" (Crenshaw, et al. 1995, xiii). The course labels white/Caucasian, Christian, men, middle-or upper class, native English speakers, U.S. citizens, non-disabled, etc., as privileged groups in the United States.

I am appalled by the blatant attempt by UW-Madison to force students to agree with one set of beliefs to attend the University as a graduate student. I would like an explanation as to why this course is mandatory for graduate and professional students to enroll in classes at UW-Madison. Why is this a graduate prerequisite? Are undergraduate students required to take a similar course? Why does the university find this an appropriate course to require students to take? Who developed this course? What was the impetus for this course and how was it developed? If students voice opposition to this mandatory course, what is the university's response?

The students of our state deserve the opportunity to learn about different viewpoints and develop their own beliefs without being required to agree with one, narrow set of beliefs that the university tries to bestow upon them before they are allowed to register for courses.

I look forward to your response and an explanation as to why the university finds this practice acceptable.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robin J. Vos". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Robin J. Vos
Wisconsin Assembly Speaker