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Representative Dave Murphy Sounds Alarm on Free Speech and Discrimination Threats in UW System

Three Recent Developments Highlight Growing Concerns Over Campus Rights

Madison, WI –Wisconsin State Representative Dave Murphy (R-Greenville), Chairman of the Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities, expressed concern over three alarming developments within the University of Wisconsin (UW-System) that he says jeopardize free speech and foster discrimination. These incidents, spanning multiple campuses, underscore what Murphy describes as a troubling erosion of core academic principles.

First, at UW-Eau Claire, on April 2, 2025, a College Republicans information table was overturned by a professor who served as chair of the department of English, raising questions about the hostility faced by conservative groups on campuses. Murphy condemned the incident, stating, “When conservative students are unfairly targeted or silenced, it’s not just a free speech violation—its discrimination based on viewpoint. The UW System must ensure all voices are heard, not just those deemed acceptable.”

Second, a complaint filed with the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights alleges that UW-Madison continues to flout the 2023 Supreme Court ruling banning race-based admissions. Murphy, who has long demanded transparency on this issue, noted, “Redacted records and vague responses suggest the University may still be prioritizing race over merit, and discriminating against qualified students. This isn’t equity—it’s a betrayal of fairness and a threat to open academic inquiry.”

Third, the recent DEI audit of the UW System, released on April 11, 2025, has drawn sharp criticism for its lack of actionable reforms and failure to address how diversity, equity, and inclusion programs may suppress free speech. Murphy, a longtime skeptic of DEI’s impact, said,

“This audit sidesteps the real issue: DEI initiatives too often prioritize ideology over merit, creating environments where dissenting voices are silenced and certain groups are treated unfairly. It’s a missed opportunity to restore balance and fairness.”

“These incidents are not isolated—they’re symptoms of a deeper problem,” Murphy warned. “The UW System is at a crossroads: it can recommit to free expression and equal treatment, or it can double down on policies that suppress dissent to favor certain groups over others.”

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