Resolution in support of Academic Freedom to Teach Race and Gender Justice, and Critical Race Theory

WHEREAS in 1894, the Board of Regents released a statement on the importance of academic freedom that remains foundational to the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s academic pursuits, famously writing: “Whatever may be the limitations which trammel inquiry elsewhere, we believe that the great state University of Wisconsin should ever encourage that continual and fearless sifting and winnowing by which alone the truth can be found;”

WHEREAS UW-Madison Faculty Policies and Procedures affirms the importance of academic freedom to the proper functioning of the university;

WHEREAS a resolution in support of Academic Freedom was endorsed by the Faculty Senate on April 4, 2011;

WHEREAS the University of Wisconsin Madison’s mission is in part to “Embody, through its policies and programs, respect for, and commitment to, the ideals of a pluralistic, multiracial, open and democratic society;”

WHEREAS University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Institutional Statement on Diversity reads: Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW–Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals. The University of Wisconsin–Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background — people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world;

WHEREAS this statement was endorsed by the Faculty Senate on September 26, 2016;

WHEREAS a resolution in Support of Instruction and Training On Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Social Justice was endorsed by the Faculty Senate on November 2, 2020;

WHEREAS the Public Representation Organization of the Faculty Senate (PROFS) has already released a statement in opposition to the proposed legislation (AB413) on “Anti-Racism and Anti-Sexism Instruction and Training at the UW System and Wisconsin Technical College System;” and John Zumbrunnen, Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning at UW-Madison stated UW-Madison opposed this legislation in his testimony before the Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities on Thursday, October 7, 2021. A similar bill has been introduced in the Wisconsin State Senate;

WHEREAS educating about systemic barriers based on race or gender should be understood as central to realizing our multiracial democracy and to the active pursuit of knowledge in the 21st century to produce engaged and informed citizens;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate at UW-Madison resolutely rejects any attempt by bodies external to the faculty to restrict or dictate university curriculum on any
matter, including matters related to racial and social justice, and will stand firm against encroachment on faculty authority by the state legislature;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate affirms that the University of Wisconsin-Madison has a responsibility and opportunity to help build equity and social justice in a nation that has for centuries struggled with issues of racial inequity and injustice, and provide students with an adequate knowledge of BIPOC and LGBTQ+ history and the policies that contributed to inequities;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Faculty Senate affirms the Joint Statement on Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism, authored by the AAUP, PEN America, the American Historical Association, and the Association of American Colleges & Universities, endorsed by over seventy organizations, and issued on June 16, 2021.