



Testimony for 69th Legislative Assembly – Senate Education Committee

February 11, 2025

Andy Armacost, President, UND

andrew.armacost@UND.edu | 701.777.2121

Bill: SB2392

Dear Chairman Beard and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Andy Armacost, and I serve as the President of the University of North Dakota. Please accept my testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 2392 along with my suggestions for changes to this proposed legislation, should it move forward.

This bill mandates training on academic freedom and freedom of speech, two bedrock principles for college campuses. Yet, there are no provisions in the bill to actually protect academic freedom or freedom of speech.

Recall that in the 68th Legislative Assembly, the authors of Senate Bill 2447 included such provisions, which are now codified into law. For Senate Bill 2392, please consider including similar provisions to establish and protect these rights.

The State of Utah recently adopted nearly identical language as what this bill describes. I include below the section from the Utah Code Section 53B-1-118, and I encourage you to adopt similar language in this bill. This will be consistent with the expectations of the leading advocates for freedom of speech and academic freedom, groups such as the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, or FIRE, and the American Association of University Professors.

In closing, I am concerned about the message this bill sends to current and prospective students and employees about our state’s commitment to academic freedom. Exposure to multiple viewpoints is a fundamental component of a university’s function and is essential to examining one’s views of the world.

Thank you.

.....

Utah Code Section 53B-1-118

(10) This section does not apply to:

- (a) requirements necessary for athletic and accreditation compliance;
- (b) academic research;
- (c) academic course teaching in the classroom;
- (d) a grant that would otherwise require:

- (i) a department, office, division, or other unit of an institution to engage in a prohibited discriminatory practice if the grant has been reviewed and approved by the institution's board of trustees; or
 - (ii) an institution to engage in a prohibited discriminatory practice if the grant has been reviewed and approved by the board;
- (e) requirements necessary for an institution to establish or maintain eligibility for any federal program; or
- (f) private scholarships administered by an institution.