

February 16, 2024

To: Senate

From: School of Business Executive Committee

Re: Proposed Policy: *Proposed Regents Policy on Use of University Administrative Websites*

The School of Business Executive Committee supports the goals of the proposed Regents Policy (6 for, 1 against, 0 abstain), however, we suggest that more web pages are included. (One voting EC member did not support the policy because of concerns that the proposed policy does not sufficiently prevent confusion between official university communications and individuals' personal viewpoints. )

The proposed policy on separating personal and official viewpoints strives to achieve a delicate balance between protecting individual academic freedom and ensuring institutional neutrality and clarity. To achieve this, the policy clarifies that the opinions expressed by individual faculty members do not represent the official stance of the University. This safeguards the institution's credibility and public trust while encouraging diverse viewpoints within the academic community.

We support disassociating official channels from personal opinions. The School of Business Executive Committee is concerned that the policy as stated does not sufficiently restrict the opportunity to express personal opinions on non-landing pages of university websites. Also, it may be unclear in some cases what is considered a landing page and what is not. We believe that there should be more exclusion of personal viewpoints on official university webpages than the policy suggests or, at the very least, that a more extensive definition of "main landing pages" be included. University websites typically include official layers below the main landing page that we think are taken to represent the University viewpoint and thus should likewise not include personal opinion.

With a more expansive definition of the “official” channels, the policy would prevent any misinterpretations and foster transparency in official communications. This would promote accountability by linking personal views to individual faculty members, encouraging responsible expression, and preventing the University from being associated with potentially controversial personal stances. Additionally, the policy maintains the efficiency and focus of official channels by dedicating them solely to official business, making it easier for stakeholders to find relevant information.

The policy recognizes the abundance of non-official platforms available for faculty members to express their personal opinions. This ensures that official channels remain dedicated to their core purpose, while individual freedom of expression is protected. The policy aligns with legal mandates like the First Amendment and reinforces established academic freedom principles, while maintaining flexibility for designated spokespersons, news and events related to faculty work, and additional unit-specific policies.

While concerns regarding potential limitations on academic freedom might arise, the policy, with an expanded definition of official webpages, strives to strike a responsible balance between individual expression and the protection of institutional neutrality and clarity in official communications. This ensures a healthy academic environment where diverse viewpoints can flourish while maintaining the University's commitment to unbiased information and public trust.