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August 22, 2016

Dear Members of the DePaul University Board of Trustees:

DePaul University recently determined to ban two different speakers from its campus, both of whom had been invited by students. These disinvitations violate American higher education's longstanding commitment to fostering the free exchange of ideas. Colleges and universities have the unique capacity to provide a place where ideas that challenge mainstream beliefs can be discussed and debated peaceably, without fear of violence or disruption.

Eminent historian C. Vann Woodward's *Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression at Yale* reminds universities of their special responsibility to permit the free expression of even the most unorthodox of views:

Without sacrificing its central purpose, [a university] cannot make its primary and dominant value the fostering of friendship, solidarity, harmony, civility, or mutual respect. . . . *Every official of the university, moreover, has a special obligation to foster free expression and to ensure that it is not obstructed.* (Italics added.)

We ask you to strengthen DePaul's Guiding Principles on Speech and Expression by incorporating, as University operating procedures, those procedures prescribed by the Woodward Committee report to protect the right of invited speakers to be heard and not disrupted. Detailed on pages 28–30 of the enclosed *Free to Teach, Free to Learn* anthology, these include: instituting the option to restrict attendance to members of the university community; announcing clear sanctions for disruption well ahead of the event as a deterrent; and employing on-site measures to identify offenders. Such language, incorporated into the University's Guiding Principles, will help administrators take the decisive actions needed to protect freedom of expression on campus.

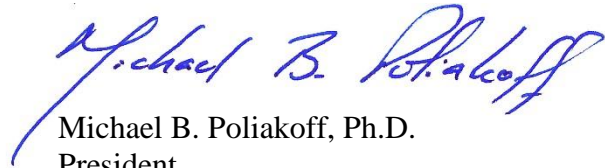
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As the *Chicago Tribune* rightly observed, the responsibility of vindicating the free exchange of ideas is now before DePaul: "Shutting someone up for a day or a month or a year until everyone's ducks are in a row is a form of censorship . . . . All speech deserves protection." **In recommending the adoption of the principles of the C. Vann Woodward Committee report, we put before the board time-tested best practices created at a similarly turbulent point in the history of American higher education.**

ACTA stands at your service, and we look forward to hearing how DePaul will proceed.

Warm regards,



Michael B. Poliakoff, Ph.D.  
President

Enclosure

cc: Rev. Dennis H. Holtschneider, C.M., President, DePaul University