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March 31, 2016

Dear Regent:

First, we thank the University for its recent decision to reinstate Assistant Professor of Communication Studies Andrea Quenette. Her suspension for controversial remarks made in the classroom was deeply disturbing and will inevitably discourage faculty from raising sensitive topics—those most in need of review and analysis by the academic community.

That is why we are writing to you now to ask you and your colleagues to take immediate action to assure the campus community of KU's unwavering commitment to academic freedom and the free exchange of ideas. The American university should rightly be a place where reasoned debate about the most profound and difficult subjects is possible.

With this goal in mind, we urge you to adopt the principles of the University of Chicago's 2014 Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression. Among those principles, one finds the following:

The University's fundamental commitment is to the principle that debate or deliberation may not be suppressed because the ideas put forth are thought by some or even by most members of the University community to be offensive, unwise, immoral, or wrong-headed. . . . Indeed, fostering the ability of members of the University community to engage in such debate and deliberation in an effective and responsible manner is an essential part of the University's educational mission.

Princeton, Purdue, Chapman, the University of Wisconsin System, and other schools have now adopted this statement. Johns Hopkins and American University have come forward with their own powerful statements.

Voluntary adoption of the Chicago principles can help revitalize the University of Kansas and universities generally as places of vigorous intellectual exchange necessary for social change. This is in keeping with *Governance for a New Era* (enclosed), in which 22 prominent signatories outlined the obligation of "trustees to have the final authority and responsibility to protect academic freedom."

PROMOTING ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND EXCELLENCE

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In adopting a formal board policy, you would be among a small—but growing—group of higher education institutions around the country that are publicly and proudly upholding academic freedom and free speech—fundamental principles of a free society and academic community. These efforts have recently been highlighted by the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, and they have received favorable attention in the national media (“Recommit to free speech on campus,” Sept. 16, 2015, enclosed).

We also commend to your attention the enclosed publication, *Free to Teach, Free to Learn*. It includes core texts concerning academic freedom in America, along with scholarly commentary and case studies. It identifies strategies that trustees, administrators, and faculty can take to foster and protect the free exchange of ideas on campus.

We are eager to help the board in any way we can and look forward to hearing how you will proceed.

Thank you for your service to American higher education.

Warm regards,



Anne D. Neal
President

Enclosures

cc: Bernadette Gray-Little, Ph.D., Chancellor, University of Kansas