

Reasons for faculty to oppose the Program for Public Discourse

as presented to the Faculty Council by Professor Jay Smith on 09/13/19

Why this resolution?

- Among faculty, concerns arose because of a lack of transparency (see the recent [op-ed](#)--News & Observer, 09/08/19)
- The mystery prompted a public records request that turned up 236 revealing pages.
- The program was conceived as a “conservative center” that would address an alleged “impoverishment” of “viewpoints” in the curriculum. **Our curricula are NOT based on “viewpoints.”**
- The program’s rationale keeps shifting. At first: “Great Books,” “American Ideals,” “Civic Virtue.” Now: “Public Discourse” and “Debate.” **Whose “needs” is it really filling?**
- One thing has been consistent, though: Outsiders are a driving force. This violates the AAUP principle that **“The faculty has primary responsibility for such fundamental areas as curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction.”**
- We believe that the faculty deserve to have more *public debate* about this program.

Will our accreditation be put at risk yet again?

- SACS accreditation principles state: **“The governing board [here, the BOG] ensures a clear and appropriate distinction between the policy-making function of the board and the responsibility of the administration and faculty to administer and implement policy.”**
 - In fact, by intervening in and participating in a curricular Program, the BOG has failed to stay in its lane. Chris Clemens says we must be “accountable” to the BOG for our teaching. This is not true.
- Continuing: **“The governing board [BOT/BOG] protects the institution from undue influence by external persons or bodies.”**
 - Instead, The Board has failed spectacularly in this instance, both by inserting itself into academic program decision-making and by actively *facilitating* the undue influence of “external persons.”
- And then: **“For each of its educational programs, the institution justifies and documents the qualifications of its faculty members.”**
 - Clemens et al. have failed to explain why the qualifications of Robert George, Paul Carrese, Jacqueline Rivers, and Cornel West are superior to those of existing UNC faculty; what do they know about “discourse” that the rest of us don’t?

Why this Program requires more discussion

- They say they value “public discourse.” This assertion is belied even by the structure of this meeting and its agenda. Why not have more, rather than less, discussion?
- Apparent duplication: we already teach “debate” and “structured argumentation” in our classes. Is there really an “impoverishment” of debate at UNC-CH?
- No other academic program with curricular prerogatives has an advisory board chaired by faculty from another institution. Why do we need any faculty from other universities involved in this program?
- No other academic program with curricular prerogatives has members of the Board of Governors and/or Board of Trustees as advisors. What are these political appointees doing here?
- Constant shifts in the stated purpose and content of this program’s work indicate that there is no intellectual, scholarly, pedagogical coherence. Whose “needs” does this program fill?
- What else could the CAS do with \$11.2 million? What would its faculty *choose* to do?
- **If you really believe in public discourse and debate, vote for this resolution.**