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Chair: James Madsen; Vice Chair: Dawn Hukai; Secretary: Todd A. Savage; Executive Committee: Stephen Reed, Jennifer Willis-Rivera

To: Dean Van Galen, Chancellor
116 North Hall
University of Wisconsin-River Falls

From: James Madsen, Chair
Faculty Senate
University of Wisconsin-River Falls

April 28, 2011

RE: UW-RF Faculty Senate Resolution 2010-2011/05

At the April 27, 2011 meeting of the University of Wisconsin-River Falls Faculty Senate, resolution 2010-2011/05 was passed. This resolution is forwarded to you for your information.

Resolution in Support of Academic Freedom*

Freedom of inquiry and expression are the bedrock upon which modern universities and democratic societies rest. The University of Wisconsin first affirmed its commitment to academic freedom in 1894 and it has reaffirmed that principle many times since then. Similarly, in politics and in government, the United States has broadened the zone of freedom, in part by making the process and the halls of government more open and transparent. The goal throughout has been to come to the type of well-reasoned, thoroughly-discussed, and openly-debated decisions that indicate a healthy democracy.

It is for these reasons the Faculty Senate of the University of Wisconsin-River Falls deplores and condemns the recent un-American efforts of the deputy executive director of the Wisconsin Republican Party to intimidate a member of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Department of History, William Cronon. Following Cronon's publication of an opinion piece placing current Wisconsin events in historical context, the Republican Party filed a Freedom of Information Act request for all of his e-mails pertaining to Governor Walker only to be interpreted as an attempt to stifle academic freedom and public discourse. It certainly will have the effect of intimidating those who intend to contribute their skill and knowledge to public debate over pressing issues. Those who wish to elevate public discourse and the "sifting and winnowing" of policy options should not attempt to silence opponents, and institutions should not accede to demands without carefully weighing competing imperatives. Silencing thoughtful debate is detrimental to a successful democracy, and repugnant to institutions of learning.

*With thanks from the UW-La Crosse Faculty Senate