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Andy Tompkins
Kansas Board of Regents
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Dear Regent,

I am writing today as a third generation Kansas State alumnus and as a regular donor to the Kansas State University Foundation. I was deeply saddened to learn of the policy regarding faculty members' use of social media recently passed by your body. I am writing to express my profound concern and to implore you to reconsider this policy.

No doubt you have heard much about academic freedom, but I would like to speak to you first simply as an employer. Like all employers, you desire to find the most qualified employees who will exceed the already high expectations placed on them by the universities in Kansas. Consider this policy from the point of view of professors who might join one of Kansas' great universities. These professors may well have other opportunities at institutions in other states – high quality academics often do. They must now decide, should they join a university where an errant tweet or poorly considered Facebook post might leave them unemployed? Or should they go somewhere that will forgive and forget? Speaking for myself, the risks you've now imposed would weigh heavily on my decision.

Consider, also, the message you are sending to the tens of thousands of young people who will attend your universities in the coming years. Instead of instilling them with the American values of free expression, boldness, and intellectual exploration, Kansas universities will now teach their students to be afraid to speak their mind. Saying something unpopular might cost them their jobs, their livelihoods, and the stability of their families. The universities of Kansas now recommend that they just keep their mouths shut.

Surely, many unpopular opinions are unpopular for a good reason and their expression would only serve to embarrass the university and the state. But, unfortunately, those in power cannot always be trusted to make that determination. King George III prevented anyone from speaking out against his rule, and because of this we rebelled. The former Soviet Union prevented scholars from fields as diverse as biology and literature from saying things that ran counter to communist party ideals. As a result, science in the USSR was set back decades and many of the former Soviet states are still trying to recover.

Over a century ago, John Stuart Mill persuasively argued that it is better for false thoughts to be expressed than for good ideas to disappear silently. Bad notions will go bankrupt in the market-

place of ideas while good ones will triumph. Even those people forced to endure untrue claims are improved because they come to know the truth with greater certainty.

The Kansas I grew up in was forged by rugged individualists – those who believed their path to the stars would be fraught with difficulty. They did and said what they thought was right regardless of what others believed. This robustness of character was embodied by the university attended by my grandfather, by my mother, and by me. Your policy is discordant with those values. It encourages Kansans to keep quiet, not to rock the boat. This is not the Kansas I remember, and it is the Kansas I want for future generations.

Thank you for your time, and for your careful consideration of this matter.

Yours in purple,

Kevin J.S. Zollman
Class of 2002

cc: President Kirk Schulz