

STATEMENT**April 19, 2022**

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Florida's Higher Education System Must Remain Free from Political Influence and Control

If Gov. DeSantis and Florida's legislative leaders demonstrated anything during today's press conference, it is that they fundamentally do not understand how Florida's higher education system works. Tenure protects the right of faculty to teach and research honestly and accurately without the threat of politicians who would fire them for doing their jobs, and it protects the rights of students to learn about whatever interests them without being told by big government how to live their lives. The statements made today are playing political games with the futures of over a million of Florida's students.

Florida's colleges and universities are some of the best in the world because our faculty are world-class experts who have earned tenure through their hard work, excellence and innovation in research and teaching. Tenure was awarded to them by the approval of their peers both internal and external to their institution, their administrators and the members of their boards of trustees, who have been appointed by the governor. All of Florida's faculty already undergo an extensive performance review process, tenured or otherwise; they are already held accountable by their peers and employers. The only missing piece in that equation is that tenured faculty cannot be fired for political reasons, meaning the passing whims of the latest politician in power cannot be used to harm the future of Florida's students and institutions. Gov. DeSantis made it clear today that controlling the thoughts and actions of the higher education community is more important to him than the quality of education Florida's students receive.

It is clear that Gov. DeSantis enjoys touting the top-ranked quality of our state's higher education system, while simultaneously failing to recognize that Florida's higher education faculty are the reason for that ranking. The United Faculty of Florida (UFF) will continue to stand firmly opposed in every way to attempts by the governor and certain legislators to harm our state's colleges and universities. We believe that real leadership is about helping the people of Florida, addressing the very real housing and wage crises families are facing, and ensuring that every student has a place on campus, not just those who would agree with Gov. DeSantis.

From where we stand, the only indoctrination occurring in Florida these days comes directly from Tallahassee. We will do all we can to keep that indoctrination out of Florida's college and university classrooms and to ensure that higher education remains free from undue political influence.

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