

TO: E. Lee Gorsuch, Chancellor, University of Alaska Anchorage  
Marshall Lind, Chancellor, University of Alaska Fairbanks  
John Pugh, Chancellor, University of Alaska Southeast

FROM: Mark R. Hamilton, President

DATE: March 13, 2001

Dear Colleagues:

A number of recent events has convinced me that I take the unusual step to state clearly and unambiguously what all of us would take as a given – The University of Alaska acknowledges and espouses the right to freedom of speech.

The recent events I referred to include professors signing a letter to President Clinton urging the preservation of ANWR, the selection of the speaker for the Bartlett lecture series, and the publishing of the poem, “Indian Girls” by Professor Linda McCarriston.

What I want to make clear and unambiguous is that responses to complaints or demands for action regarding constitutionally guaranteed freedoms of speech **CANNOT BE QUALIFIED**. Attempts to assuage anger or to demonstrate concern by qualifying our support for free speech serve to cloud what must be a clear message. Noting that, for example, “The University supports the right to free speech, but we intend to check into this matter,” or “The University supports the right of free speech, but I have asked Dean X or Provost Y to investigate the circumstances,” is unacceptable. There is nothing to “check into,” nothing “to investigate.”

Opinions expressed by our employees, students, faculty or administrators don’t have to be politic or polite. However personally offended we might be, however unfair the association of the University to the opinion might be, I insist that we remain a certain trumpet on this most precious of Constitutional rights.

I am directing you, the Chancellors, to effect wide dissemination of this letter. I would prefer it to go forward with your endorsement.

MRH/bb

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