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OAKLAND UNIVERSITY INTIMIDATES STUDENTS AND FACULTY

Students Censored And Faculty Threatened

ROCHESTER, MICH. – Oakland University administrators tried to stifle dissent regarding the contract negotiations between the American Association of University Professors and OU. OU threatened faculty with fines and has misled students that they are responsible for missed work. Both are inaccurate and circumvent legal processes.

The Administration issued a press release this morning claiming that “the university will ask an Oakland County Circuit Court judge to order faculty members back to work.” Faculty protests are legal if a judge deems that the administration is bargaining in bad faith.

Also, Mary Beth Snyder, OU Vice President for Student Affairs, emailed all students rebuking faculty. Undergraduate Emily Day responded: “I was disappointed to see the email sent out by Mary Beth Snyder when I awoke this morning. It is unconscionable that the administrators at this University would resort to the legal action they are now threatening. Their choice to remain rigid and appeal to judges in an attempt to bypass the negotiation process is indicative of the loss of moral code in our current society.”

President Gary Russi wrote a separate email threatening faculty with economic penalties: “University faculty pay has been docked over the last eight days and will continue to be docked so long as a work stoppage continues.” AAUP attorneys insist that stopping pay without due process is illegal. Individual hearings are necessary before pay can be docked. While Michigan law does permit wage sanctions against K-12 teachers, it does not apply to higher education.

The administration also ordered students to take down signs supporting professors. On Friday, September 4, an Oakland University freshman who posted a pro-faculty sign in her eighth-floor dormitory window was ordered to take it down.

Michelle Poterek, 18, from Sterling Heights, created a hand-lettered sign that read: “An injury to one is an injury to all.” She said she supports the faculty in its ongoing contract dispute with the university administration.

“My R.A. said, ‘Michelle, you have to take down your sign.’ I asked why and she said she was told by her supervisor to tell me to remove it.

“There is no way they should be able to control what you think,” Poterek said. “That’s pretty scary when you are a freshman.”

AAUP and Oakland University have been without a contract since Thursday, September 3. Both sides have been in negotiations throughout the Labor Day weekend. A primary issue is the administration’s attempt to remove faculty voice in university decision making.

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The AAUP will have a public rally on campus in front of Wilson Hall at 3PM, September 8, 2009. Please call 248-659-8179 for further information.