



May 30, 2019

Dear Campus Community,

As you might know, the College Republicans, a registered student organization on campus, has invited Joey Gibson to speak on campus on June 4.

As an institution of higher education, Western Oregon University supports free speech and open inquiry, which are essential to a comprehensive university experience and for students to form their own viewpoints and perspectives. At WOU, all student clubs and organizations follow an approved protocol for bringing speakers to campus and reserving space, which includes a review of the event and a contract with the proposed speaker. As a public entity, WOU may not deny access to meeting space on the basis of viewpoint.

The University's obligation to the freedom of speech is animated not only by the First Amendment to the US Constitution, but the even-broader Article I, Section 8 of the Oregon Constitution. It states:

“No law shall be passed restraining the free expression of opinion, or restricting the right to speak, write, or print freely on any subject whatever; but every person shall be responsible for the abuse of this right.”

This clause has been interpreted many times to require tremendous breadth in ensuring and upholding the freedom of expression in Oregon—a role a public university must embrace to remain relevant in our changing times.

Upholding core freedoms—including the freedom of speech—does not mean, however, the University must turn from its values. WOU's Strategic Plan outlines eight essential values that guide our practices and decisions. The Plan expressly includes: **Diversity and Respect: Equity and inclusion; a fundamental basis in human diversity; appreciation for the complexity of the world; strength drawn from our variety of backgrounds, abilities, cultural experiences, identities, knowledge domains and means of expression.**

Our values are who we are—we can be a place of diversity and respect, as well as a fierce defender of the freedom of speech and expression at the same time.

Thank you.

Rex Fuller, President

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**Office of the President**