Department of Communication Resolution in Support of Academic Freedom

Motivated by our deep interest in the intellectual development of our students, we, the members of the faculty of the Department of Communication, are united in our commitment to resist attempts by shortsighted members of the South Carolina State Legislature to assault academic freedom here at the College of Charleston. Specifically, we condemn the legislature’s move to cut state funding for the College of Charleston by $52,000 as punishment for adopting the book *Fun Home*.

We unequivocally believe that academic freedom for faculty is indispensable to our Department’s mission to promote a climate of robust, searching intellectual inquiry that helps our students develop into engaged citizens preparing for leadership roles in their professions, country, and world. As faculty in a department that so highly values communication, we are acutely aware that academic freedom is inextricably connected to freedom of expression. We are therefore concerned that undermining academic freedom will make some students believe that they cannot freely, openly, and vigorously express their opinions as we want them to do as part of a quality liberal arts education.

We are also deeply concerned that the legislature’s actions project an embarrassingly archaic image of our state that could undermine the impressive progress the College has made in establishing itself as a nationally prominent institution of higher education.

For us as faculty members, the issue here is not the contents of the specific book that has been so inappropriately targeted by legislators but rather the fundamentally important principle that faculty, acting on the basis of what they believe best for their students, should be free to make decisions about what books and other curricular materials will be studied and discussed by our students. We want to stress emphatically that we would oppose just as strenuously any financial, political, or other attempts by legislators to pressure faculty to support the book in question by making it required reading.

We strongly believe that a faculty that has lost its academic freedom is a faculty that has lost its reason for being. We just as strongly believe that a faculty devoted, as we strive to be, to the best interests of its students, has a duty, not just a right, to speak out against threats to academic freedom. To remain silent in the face of unwarranted attacks on academic freedom would be to jeopardize the trust that we believe our students have invested in us. This resolution represents a public promise by the united Department of Communication faculty to our students: We shall never betray your trust.