



Office of the President

Oct. 1, 2007

To faculty, students and staff:

I'd like to take this opportunity to let you know what measures we are taking to ensure the University of Florida remains a civil and secure environment to host events of all kinds on our campus.

In order to allow ample time for changing policies or protocols in light of the incident following Sen. John Kerry's town hall forum two weeks ago, I have asked the ACCENT Speaker's Bureau to reschedule the Oct. 11 appearance of Dr. Jack Kevorkian to a later date this academic year.

The event, and a subsequent panel discussion on assisted suicide by several faculty members in law, medicine and philosophy, now will be held at 8 p.m. on January 15 in the Stephen C. O'Connell Center.

The decision was not an easy one. It was made only after much thought and consultation with the University Police Department, Student Affairs, Student Government and members of ACCENT.

It is our responsibility as an academic institution to provide a safe environment where everyone feels free to express their views, no matter what they are. Like other universities, UF is a special place where free expression and the lively exchange of ideas remain vital to our educational mission.

Speakers appearing on our campus in recent years have spoken against the death penalty, pleaded their innocence in steroid scandals and criticized leaders in opposing political parties. They have been presidents, entertainers, industry icons, sports heroes and the like.

I remain committed to welcoming these kinds of speakers as part of the campus dialogue.

Meanwhile, we are awaiting the results of an independent review by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement of the events that led to the arrest of one of our students two weeks ago. As I have said before, they have our full cooperation and we want them to have every opportunity to conduct a thorough investigation.

Also we plan to announce this week the formation of a nine-member task force consisting of students and faculty to review police protocols and our events management practices. The group will be charged with developing a series of recommendations for the university. Former Faculty Senate President Kim Tanzer has agreed to chair this task force.

On none of these actions have we requested or set any deadlines. While we all would like to see these matters resolved sooner rather than later, I believe we should allow adequate time to make any policy or protocol changes needed to ensure a safe and civil environment for full, free, diverse and lively discourse.

I will continue to provide updates on our progress at www.president.ufl.edu.

The Foundation for The Gator Nation

An Equal Opportunity Institution

Sincerely,

J. Bernard Machen
President
University of Florida