

Close to McCarthyism

I attended state Sen. John Andrews' hearing on academic freedom because the issues are also important for those of us who teach at private institutions. It was useful to hear the student testimony, and I applaud Andrews for scheduling the hearing. I also responded to Andrews' open invitation to attendees to submit additional testimony and commentary by e-mailing him five pages of impressions after the hearing.

In fairness to the testifying students, it wasn't always clear that institutions have been entirely responsive to their grievances even when procedures were followed. But I think that this is less the product of liberal bias than it is of the often-moribund nature of academic bureaucracies. In any case, it's something for universities and colleges to work on, not legislatures.

And although the names of professors accused of liberal bias were not mentioned in the oral testimony, the Campus Accountability Project circulated a lengthy written transcript of student testimony — available to anyone who walked into the hearing room — that did "name names." As Spencer notes, the accused were unable to defend themselves.

Accusations of McCarthyism have been flying from both sides in the academic freedom debate, nearly all of them knee-jerk and misdirected. But the Campus Accountability Project's actions, and those of the sponsoring Independence Institute, come as close to McCarthyism as any. They should be roundly condemned.

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