

UNIVERSITY OF  
ROCHESTER

26 March 2004

Thomas Jackson, President  
University of Rochester  
240 Wallis Hall

President Jackson,

We write to express our very grave concern regarding the "Affirmative Action Bake Sale" sponsored by the College Republicans on campus last week (as reported in the *Democrat & Chronicle*, 20 March 2004). This event is part of a larger pattern of similar activities on college campuses across the country. While Rochester students hardly have taken the lead in mounting such activities, we strongly believe the University of Rochester Administration must take the lead in labeling this event just what it is - outrageous and offensive.

We ask that - at a minimum - the University Administration immediately, forthrightly, and publicly denounce this activity as inappropriate in our intellectual community. We do not see this as a matter of free speech. The students involved clearly have a right to think and say what they want. But words have consequences and those who exercise their right to free expression bear a correlative responsibility for the views they express. In this instance the students who participated in this activity ought to be told quite clearly that their views are bigoted, intolerant, and patronizing.

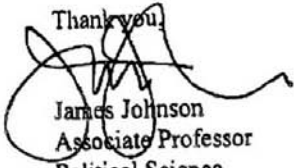
The College Republicans will no doubt protest at having their views depicted in so unfavorable a manner. But such protests, while predictable, are disingenuous. The bigoted nature of their activity is both clear and unacceptable. Why offer for sale Oreos and Moon Pies rather than Granola, Oatmeal Cookies, and Apple Turnovers? Why differentiate prices in ways that target women and students from racial or ethnic minorities instead of student-athletes, students from various geographical regions or socio-economic categories, "legacy" students, or others who benefit from the various criteria the University uses to make admissions decisions? Why hold a "Bake Sale" rather than propose speakers or debates or symposia on campus where students, faculty and administrators might state their views in public and take direct

responsibility for their views? The answers to these questions are quite simple. This event was not intended to press a demand for "fairness." It was designed to question the presence on our campus of individual students who, by virtue of their gender, racial and/or ethnic identities, the College Republicans assume have no rightful place at the University. It therefore had the entirely foreseeable consequence of placing women and minority students on the defensive, of making them feel the need to justify their membership in the University community.

Although we in no way contest the right of the students who staged the Bake Sale to think and say what they want, we want to point out that their rights are constrained by the same rules that govern other members of the University community. So in addition to issuing a forthright response to this event we ask that you initiate an inquiry to ascertain whether the students involved complied with relevant University policies. For example, were student activities fees used for this event? Are such events allowed under the mandate established by the Student Activities Office? Did the event create a hostile environment on campus - one in which, say, a female student or a student from one or another racial or ethnic minority was directly embarrassed or humiliated? The University has clear policies that govern the behavior of students, staff and faculty on campus. It is incumbent on your Administration to insure that such policies are enforced. Moreover, it is imperative that, if in fact such policies have been breached, any official remedial action as may be deemed necessary be taken promptly - this is not a matter which can be allowed to fester for months.

Finally, the College Republicans claim to be concerned with the "unfairness" of Affirmative Action. One further immediate step your Administration needs to take is to spell out clearly how principles of fairness and diversity inform the University's intellectual mission and how that mission, in turn, finds expression in policies aimed at creating an educational and social environment that is safe and welcoming to all students. The College Republicans have presented the University of Rochester Administration with a clear opportunity to reassert in a forthright and proud manner the convictions that the University Community is meant to embody. We urge you to embrace this course.

Thank you.



James Johnson  
Associate Professor  
Political Science

And the following members of the faculty: [34 names followed]