



July 8, 2010

Eric Godfrey
Vice President and Vice Provost for Student Life
University of Washington
101 Gerberding Hall
Box 351266
Seattle, WA 98195

ACLU OF WASHINGTON

901 FIFTH AVENUE #630
SEATTLE, WA 98164
T/206.624.2184
WWW.ACLU-WA.ORG

JESSE WING
BOARD PRESIDENT

KATHLEEN TAYLOR
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Vice President Godfrey,

I was dismayed to learn that officials of the University of Washington Police Department have engaged in political surveillance of university students and, furthermore, that UWPD supervisors condoned these actions. These actions violate university policy that restricts collection of information on political activities and beliefs.

We urge the University to issue a clear statement that government surveillance based on political ideology is not permissible. Further, we call upon the University of Washington to ensure its policy limiting intelligence collection is enforced and to provide training to all officers to avoid further collection of information about political and religious views and activities of its students, faculty or staff unless the information is necessary for an active criminal investigation.

As you are aware, the University of Washington Student Worker Coalition (SWC), which was formed to address both student and worker concerns around budget cuts, held various meetings and several lawful demonstrations in support of University workers. Without any suspicion of criminal activity, University police targeted SWC meetings for surveillance.

The ACLU learned through a public records request that a UWPD officer attempted to infiltrate a Student Worker Coalition meeting at Suzzallo Café on April 1, 2010. Noting that this was “not an open meeting,” the officer sat at a

July 8, 2010
Vice President Godfrey
Page 2 of 3

neighboring table and took notes. In an April 2, 2010 e-mail to a UWPD lieutenant, the officer discussed in detail the content of the SWC meeting, participants' political beliefs, their plans to work with various worker groups throughout the UW community, and even reported on jokes told throughout. Both her superior and a deputy chief said the officer "did a great job" monitoring the SWC.

The UWPD e-mail sheds new light on a previously disclosed incident involving the same officer. On April 8th, a woman named "Tani," who described herself as a UW alumna, actively participated in an SWC meeting to plan for a May 3rd campus demonstration. The following week, several SWC members encountered the officer in police uniform and confronted her, upon which she admitted to being the person posing as "Tani" who attended the SWC meeting.

These activities are inconsistent with UWPD's own policy regarding intelligence collection, which state that the "sole purpose" of information collection is "eliminating criminal activity," and that "[i]nformation collected is limited to suspected criminal conduct and activities that are crimes." By collecting non-criminal information about the SWC – including their political ideas, allies, and statements – the UWPD went beyond the limitations set forth in its Operations Manual.

I am sure you understand the threat to academic excellence, rigor and ethics posed by the chilling effect of political surveillance activities. The University must take concrete steps to prevent collection of political information unless specifically connected to the investigation of a crime.

The UWPD is not alone in engaging in improper political surveillance. Just last month three police agencies paid \$400,000 to settle a civil rights claim made by Evergreen College student Phil Chinn. These incidents illustrate the need for state legislation to allow government to collect information about an individual's free speech, political, or religious activities only in relation to an

July 8, 2010
Vice President Godfrey
Page 3 of 3

ongoing criminal investigation. We hope that the University will support such legislation in the 2011 Washington Legislature.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kathleen Taylor", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kathleen Taylor
Executive Director
ACLU of Washington

Cc: John N. Vinson, Ph. D., Chief of Police, University of Washington Police
Department