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## Free speech group ridicules Marquette for removal of Barry quote

(Published Thursday, October 19, 2006 10:05:42 AM CDT)

By Ryan J. Foley  
Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. - A national free speech group lambasted Marquette University administrators Wednesday for removing a quote by humorist Dave Barry from a graduate student's office door.

The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education criticized a Marquette administrator for removing this Barry quote from the office door of doctoral student Stuart Ditsler last month: "As Americans we must always remember that we all have a common enemy, an enemy that is dangerous, powerful, and relentless. I refer, of course, to the federal government."

Philosophy Department Chair James South said in a Sept. 5 e-mail that he removed the quotation, which was posted in late August at the office shared by Ditsler and three others, after receiving several complaints. In the e-mail, South said he supports academic freedom but hallways and office doors are not "free speech zones."

"If material is patently offensive and has no obvious academic import or university sanction, I have little choice but to take note," he wrote in the e-mail released Wednesday by the Philadelphia-based free speech group.

FIRE president Greg Lukianoff said his group went public with the information to embarrass Marquette, a private Catholic university in downtown Milwaukee. The school claims to protect free speech rights but really does not, he said.

"It's just interesting to see such a ridiculous case at Marquette," Lukianoff said. "If Dave Barry is patently offensive, it's hard to imagine what speech is protected at

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Marquette."

Barry is a humor columnist whose work has appeared in hundreds of newspapers.

Marquette spokeswoman Brigid O'Brien Miller said the quote was not attributed and therefore those who complained were not aware it was from Barry and failed to understand it was meant to be satirical.

"This was primarily a workplace issue, not an issue of academic freedom," she said. "Dr. South was responding to complaints regarding what some felt was offensive material."

She said Marquette values academic freedom and free speech.

The free speech group received a complaint from Ditsler and sent a letter last month to Marquette University President Robert Wild asking him to reconsider the removal.

"Even by the most conservative standards, the Barry quote cannot be suitably described as 'patently offensive'," FIRE program director Tara Sweeney wrote in her letter to Wild.

Wild responded with a letter dated Monday saying the matter has been resolved and "that the original difficulty arose out of misunderstanding." But Lukianoff said his group had not received any response and therefore made the case public Wednesday.

FIRE was the group that revealed last year UW-Eau Claire's policy of banning resident assistants from hosting Bible studies in their dorm rooms. The public attention to the case prompted the UW System to change its policy to allow RAs to host such events on their own time.

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