

Editor's note: Provost Patrick Farrell sent the following letter to part-time lecturer Kevin Barrett on July 20. The letter is the subject of an Aug. 3 Associated Press article. The intent of Farrell's letter was to reinforce that, in his interviews with media, Barrett make it clear that his personal views are in no way associated with the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Farrell also needed to be certain that Barrett's private "911 truth" movement not interfere with — and be clearly separated from — his professional responsibilities as an instructor, which begins this fall.

July 20, 2006

Dr. Kevin Barrett

Via certified mail

Dear Dr. Barrett:

I want to be clear with you as to my expectations for you for the coming months. Based on the meeting with you, Dean Sandefur, and Department Chair Rafferty on July 3, 2006, I have accepted your assurance that you could control your enthusiasm for your personal viewpoints on the topic of 9/11 and present them in class in an objective and balanced time frame and context. Given your assurance and the rest of our review, I was willing to allow you to teach the course in the fall.

As we discussed on the telephone on July 11, your subsequent efforts to publicize your ideas suggest that publicity for your views is paramount. If that were to continue, I would doubt your assurance that you will separate your own views and interests, as well as your capacity to separate them from what is needed for a good educational experience for our students.

Further, I was quite clear in our conversation on July 11 about how you identify yourself and your connection with the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the context of supporting your ideas on 9/11. The debate challenges you have sent identify yourself as an instructor at UW-Madison, suggesting that you speak for the university—precisely what I told you was inappropriate in that context.

In summary, if you continue to identify yourself with UW-Madison in your personal political messages or illustrate an inability to control your interest in publicity for your ideas, I would lose confidence that your assurances with regard to the course can be believed.

Sincerely,

Patrick Farrell
Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

xc: Gary Sandefur, Dean, College of Letters and Science
Ellen Rafferty, Chair, Dept. of Languages and Cultures of Asia