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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 14, 2005

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UW-System to seek Attorney General's opinion on resident assistants leading certain activities in their dormitory rooms

MADISON – At the request of the University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents on Friday, Nov. 11, UW System President Kevin P. Reilly today asked Wisconsin Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager for a formal opinion on the constitutionality of university practice and policy regarding resident assistants' (RA) leading and organizing certain activities, including religious studies, in their dormitory rooms.

"I am requesting your written opinion as to whether the university's practice is consistent with First Amendment standards," Reilly stated in his letter (see attached). He added that the Attorney General's opinion could also help "to provide guidance for all UW institutions."

Reilly's request comes as a result of UW-Eau Claire's employment practice regarding resident assistants which prohibits RAs from leading, organizing or recruiting students for activities such as partisan political events, religious studies, or sales parties.

"It has been suggested," wrote Reilly, "that such practices or policies might interfere with rights of RAs protected under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

"Related concerns," he continued, "are whether, or to what degree, permitting religious activity in the circumstances of RA employment might contravene the establishment clause of the First Amendment.

"Thus," said Reilly, "I look forward to your opinion."

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