



University of Wisconsin System

1700 Van Hise Hall, 1220 Linden Drive
Madison, Wisconsin 53706
Phone (608) 263-5512 Fax (608) 262-3985
<http://www.wisconsin.edu>

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Kate Dixon
(608) 265-3195

UW System will examine resident assistant roles and activities

MADISON — University of Wisconsin System President Kevin P. Reilly today announced the formation of a committee of campus student-life experts who will help develop systemwide policies to guide activities of resident assistants (RAs) on UW campuses.

Concerns have been raised in recent weeks about the constitutionality and communication of practices that preclude university RAs from leading, organizing, or recruiting students for certain activities in residence halls where they live and work.

“These are complex and serious questions, and I want UW policies in this regard to be consistent and appropriate in every way,” Reilly said. “I trust these experts will move quickly in helping us ensure UW policies meet constitutional requirements, and at the same time, advance education and opportunities for students who participate in residence life.”

Reilly has asked UW chancellors to nominate members for the advisory committee, which will lead a systemwide review and clarification of university practices regarding RAs, sometimes known as house fellows. During the course of the review, Reilly has asked UW campuses to enforce policies and practices in this area only if complaints about specific conduct by RAs are received and found to be valid. His actions follow the notice that the Wisconsin Attorney General will not fulfill his request for an opinion that would offer guidance about relevant constitutional issues.

According to Reilly, the advisory committee of individuals with substantial expertise in residence life and student services will examine RA roles in residence life programs, the relationship of RA activities to wider student educational experiences, and the expectations of RAs as university employees. Committee members will be asked to consider the degree of influence RAs have within residence halls, the extent of RA responsibility for providing a supportive and inclusive environment for students who live in residence halls, and the personal interests of RAs in being engaged and active participants in campus life.

Chancellors will name their representative to the committee by Dec. 9. Reilly will ask the advisory committee to forward recommendations for future resident assistant policies by Jan. 9, 2006.

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