

2006

James A. Lake Academic Freedom Award Presentation

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Dr. DEWAYNE BALL

James A. Lake Academic Freedom Award Presentation

2:30 p.m. City Union

April 25, 2006

John C. Owens, NU Vice President and Harlan Vice Chancellor,
IANR

It is both my honor and privilege to be here today to present the James A Lake Academic Freedom Award. I thank you for this opportunity.

In a story written about the late James A. Lake Sr., I read that the former law professor once called academic freedom "the heart and guts of the university.

He also said, "I don't see how the university can exist if people who are doing studies are "afraid" to publish the results."

He was right. Absolutely correct. Our academic culture must be "one" of free inquiry, where all are free to explore, to speak, to question, to engage in vigorous discussion-and debate on the important issues of our day, and to disagree, when we must - hopefully civilly - but "certainly" without fear-of-retribution.

If we cannot openly and honestly explore and discuss the huge, often difficult, and sometimes contentious "questions" of our day on our university campus, if we cannot freely "seek answers" to tomorrow's concerns, then "where" can such things be discussed? And "the corollary" to that – if we cannot agree to honor every colleague's right to conduct research, make inquiry, and speak his or her truth concerning the significant issues of our day, to press responsibly for open and informed debate, "where" will that be done?

If we cannot remain "open" to what our colleagues say while taking another view, and challenge each other to think and act with the integrity "expected" of us – if we cannot set that example here, at the university where since 1869 Nebraskans have looked to for answers, then "where" will it occur?

Academic freedom carries with it tremendous responsibility for each of us, because not only are we called to "participate" in it, we also "model" it for future generations. We teach others courage – or fear – by our own "citizenship."

I use the word "citizenship" because I remember the late world-class genetist and plant breeder Dermot Coyne, a James A. Lake Academic Freedom Award recipient in 1988 and a member of our faculty for 40 years, reflecting near-the-end of his career on his principled-beliefs in academic freedom and citizenship.

A strong advocate for both, Dermot, a quiet, extremely intelligent, and very thoughtful person, sometimes found himself on the unpopular side of issues or in the midst of controversies.

"Generally, I don't seek trouble or problems but I've often found myself being asked to get involved," he said in one of his last interviews. "I don't particularly enjoy it. I find it disruptive to my work, but it's part of being a responsible citizen."

He didn't seek out problems, Dermot said, but he was a person with the courage to step forward when stepping forward was needed, because, in his own words, it was "part of being a responsible citizen."

We all are called to that citizenship every day, as we exercise our very important right of academic freedom, and fulfill the very important responsibility that goes with it.

Today we honor Dr. Dwayne Ball of the Department of Marketing in the College of Business Administration as the 2006 James A Lake Academic Freedom Award recipient. A member of the university faculty since 1987, Dr. Ball earned his baccalaureate degree at Rice University and his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from the Ohio State University. His academic interests include: measurement, marketing research, consumer behavior, multivariate statistical methods, new product development, and database marketing. For many years Dr. Ball has been a strong advocate of academic-freedom at the college, university, and state levels. He has been an active member of both the American Civil Liberties Union, serving on the board of ACLU-Nebraska, and of the Academic-Freedom-Coalition of Nebraska, where he has served as president, secretary, and board member.

I'd like to quote just a few of the wonderful comments made by those who supported him for this award:

"Dr. Ball has been a guiding light in the pursuit of academic freedom for students, teachers, and librarians across Nebraska. His clear, thoughtful, and balanced approach to identifying and addressing issues is well-respected. He takes a non-partisan approach and offers strength and encouragement to others in the face of considerable challenge."

"Dwayne is remarkable not just in the strength of his commitment to academic freedom but in the consistency of that commitment, regardless of who or what is being censored."

"Dwayne's dedication to academic freedom ... extends to the freedom of all, faculty and students, left and right; and in this respect he is in my opinion unusual. It is always easy to fight for the rights of those with whom one agrees; it is rare that anyone puts the cliché 'I disagree with what you say; I will fight to the death for your right to say it' into practice as consistently as Dwayne does."

High accolades indeed for this year's James A. Lake
Academic Freedom Award recipient, Dr. Dwayne Ball.

(Lead applause)

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