

SCHOOL FOR WORKERS
STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY ON ENGAGEMENT AND CONTROVERSY

The SFW mission statement embodies our philosophy on engagement and controversy:

“Our overall mission is to empower working people and labor organizations at the job site, in the national economy and in the global economic system through a comprehensive program of lifelong adult learning opportunities.”

Our mission to empower working people through education relies heavily on the University of Wisconsin’s endorsement and support of two long held and fundamental principles: the Wisconsin Idea and academic freedom.

The Wisconsin Idea mandates the delivery of University resources to all inhabitants of the state. SFW’s role is to provide those educational and research services to the working people and organized labor. We deliver knowledge and develop skills that enable workers to understand and advance their interests in the work environment and in society. An informed and engaged workforce is critical to a strong democratic society and University outreach is crucial to building democracy and economic strength.

Academic freedom, as a process of “sifting and winnowing” for truth, is a guiding principle in our activities. The employment environment is multi-faceted, presenting a wide range of challenges, problems and conflicts. Economic conditions at the local, national and global levels generate both cooperative and adversarial situations and relationships in the workplace and in society. Inevitably, education that empowers workers to recognize and pursue their interests and the interests of workers generally will address areas of controversy. Rather than shy away from such territory, we believe controversy offers exceptional educational opportunities. However, those opportunities can only be pursued meaningfully in a learning environment that embraces a broad and robust definition of engagement.

We rely on the University vigilantly to protect and nurture intellectual inquiry, discussion and debate. A strong democratic society requires an educated and involved citizenry. By helping promote a forum for contesting differing values, ideas and actions, the University best serves the citizens of the state.