

UCFW Position on RE89

April 13, 2007

Despite the history of the tobacco industry's shameful funding of research studies designed to deny and obscure the harmful effects of its products, UCFW strongly opposed adoption of RE89 for the following reasons:

- The principles of academic freedom require that faculty be able to pursue research ideas and research funds according to their own views as to intellectual and scientific merit.
- Adoption of RE89 would start UC down a slippery slope on which many other funding sources will be open to challenge on the grounds that they have "bought" skewed research studies, or that their products cause serious social or environmental harm. Funding from the oil industry, the timber industry, the pharmaceutical industry, the defense industry, and many other sources might be open to challenge.
- Adoption of RE89 may also encourage other funding sources to attempt to blackmail UC into banning acceptance of funds from sources of which they disapprove, as has happened in the case of tobacco funding.
- Existing UC policies and practices on freedom to publish, peer review of research, and adherence to ethical principles are sufficient to safeguard against the kinds of research abuses the tobacco industry has induced some funding recipients to commit.

UCFW condemns the past practices of the tobacco industry, but it defends the right of its colleagues to accept tobacco money for research, subject to the ethical, peer review, regulatory, and other constraints that apply generally to acceptance of research funds.

So long as the University pursues corporate or industry funding for research, the specter of research findings skewed to favor the funding source will present a problem. Short of banning acceptance of research funds from all sources with an interest in particular outcomes, UC should focus on evaluation of the researcher on the basis of the integrity and merit of the research, rather than the source of the funding.