

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
AUSTIN DIVISION

RICHARD LOWERY

Plaintiff,

v.

LILLIAN MILLS, in her official capacity
as Dean of the McCombs School of Business
at the University of Texas at Austin; ETHAN
BURRIS, in his official capacity as Senior
Associate Dean for Academic Affairs of the
McCombs School of Business at the
University of Texas-Austin; and CLEMENS
SIALM, in his official capacity as Finance
Department Chair for the McCombs School
of Business at the University of Texas-Austin

Defendants.

§
§
§
§
§
§
§
§
§
§
§
§
§
§
§
§
§
§
§

CIVIL ACTION NO. 1:23-cv-00129-LY

**DEFENDANTS LILLIAN MILLS, ETHAN BURRIS AND CLEMENS SIALM
ORIGINAL ANSWER AND AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSES**

Defendants Lillian Mills, Ethan Burris and Clemens Sialm (“Defendants”) hereby answer the Complaint for Declaratory and Injunctive Relief of Plaintiff Richard Lowery (“Lowery” or “Plaintiff”). Defendants will cite Plaintiff’s allegations in the Complaint and follow with their response, then plead their affirmative defenses and other defensive matters.

I. JURISDICTION AND VENUE

1. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331 because this case presents questions of federal law.

RESPONSE: Defendants deny the allegations in this paragraph. The Court lacks subject-matter jurisdiction for the reasons stated in Defendants’ Motion to Dismiss. Accordingly, Defendants assert sovereign immunity, lack of standing and ripeness, and the failure to state a claim as affirmative defenses to Plaintiff’s claims, *see below*.

2. Venue lies in this Court because all defendants reside in this judicial district, and the events giving rise to these claims occurred and are occurring here. 28 U.S.C. §§ 1391(b)(1) and (b)(2).

RESPONSE: Defendants deny that certain alleged events have “occurred and are occurring.” Defendants admit that they reside in this judicial district.

II. PARTIES

3. Plaintiff Lowery is an Associate Professor of Finance at the McCombs School of Business at UT. Prof. Lowery also serves as an Associate Director at the Salem Center for Policy, an academic institute that is part of the McCombs School.

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that Lowery is a tenured member of the faculty at the McCombs School, and that he has been appointed (and was recently reappointed) as an administrative program director for the Salem Center.

4. Defendant Lillian Mills is the Dean of the McCombs School. She is sued in her official capacity. Dean Mills has the power to control or influence the conditions of Lowery’s employment at UT.

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that Dean Mills is the Dean of the McCombs School and that she is sued in her official capacity, but any such “power and control” as alleged is limited, *inter alia*, due to the tenured status of Professor Lowery’s position at the University, so Defendants otherwise deny the allegations in this paragraph.

5. Defendant Ethan Burriss is the Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs of the McCombs School. He is sued in his official capacity. Associate Dean Burriss has the power to control or influence the conditions of Lowery’s employment at UT.

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that Dean Burriss is the Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at the McCombs School and that he is sued in his official capacity, but any such “power and control” as alleged is limited, *inter alia*, due to the tenured status of Professor Lowery’s position at the University. Otherwise, denied.

6. Defendant Sheridan Titman is the Chair of the McCombs School’s Department of Finance. He is sued in his official capacity. Chair Titman has the power to control or influence the conditions of Lowery’s employment at UT.

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that Professor Titman was the Chair of the Department of Finance at the McCombs School until September 1, 2023, and that he was sued in his official capacity, and otherwise deny the allegations in this paragraph. Effective September 1, 2023, Dr. Clemens Sialm succeeded Dr. Titman as Chair of the Finance Department. Otherwise, denied.

III. STATEMENT OF FACTS

Professor Lowery's public commentary on university affairs

7. Lowery has a well-established history of speaking on controversial public affairs topics. His published commentary has appeared in newspapers and online publications such as *The Hill*, the *Texas Tribune*, the *Houston Chronicle*, the *Ft. Worth Star-Telegram*, the *Washington Times*, and *The CollegeFix*.

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that Plaintiff has spoken on controversial topics. Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations, which are therefore denied.

8. Professor Lowery dissents from the political and academic views that are held by the majority of his peers and superiors at UT, often publicly, and sometimes uses pointed terminology to get his points across. He also does not shy from making his opinions known to elected officials in Texas, including those who oversee funding for UT.

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that Plaintiff has expressed his views publicly, including to government officials. Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations, which are therefore denied.

9. In recent years, Lowery has repeatedly criticized UT's senior officials ("UT's Administration"), including President Jay Hartzell, and their approaches to issues such as critical-race theory indoctrination, affirmative action, academic freedom, competence-based performance measures, and the future of capitalism.

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that Plaintiff has criticized University officials, including President Hartzell. Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations, which are therefore denied.

10. He has in particular complained about the UT Administration's use of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) requirements to filter out competent academics who dissent from the DEI

ideology prevailing on campus.

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that Plaintiff is critical of DEI and that he believes it has been used by the University. Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations, which are therefore denied.

11. For example, on December 21, 2021, Professor Lowery published a column in the online periodical, *The College Fix*, challenging UT's recent \$100,000 GoKar program for subsidizing the teaching of critical race theory to young children. Richard Lowery, *At UT-Austin, teaching white 4-year-olds that they're racist is funded by taxpayer dollars*, THE COLLEGE FIX (Dec. 1, 2021) <http://bit.ly/3RptYwV>. Lowery called the GoKar program a "grave misuse of state funds for public purposes." He also criticized UT's use of DEI grants as the "diversion of state resources to political advocacy through bureaucratic means..." and the lack of oversight by elected leaders.

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that Plaintiff published an article stating his view. (To be clear, the article uses the phrase "for political purposes," not "for public purposes"). Otherwise, denied.

12. Similarly, in June 2022, Lowery published a pointed criticism of race-based affirmative action in admissions at UT in the *Washington Times*. Richard Lowery, *Perpetuating racism: Why universities insist on 'affirmative action'*, THE WASHINGTON TIMES (June 28, 2022), <http://bit.ly/3kKNBDl>. He opined that racist admission policies were operationalized through university DEI offices and the placement of critical race theorists in positions of power, posing several questions to his readers, such as: "Why are [university presidents] more scared of racist faculty than of their state government, which should be monitoring them to make sure they are focused on excellence and equal treatment of students?" Lowery encouraged Texans to seek answers from their state representatives.

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that Plaintiff published an article stating his view. Otherwise denied.

Lowery criticizes the UT Administration's hijacking of the Liberty Institute

13. Lowery has a longstanding commitment to increasing viewpoint diversity on the UT campus, both through his work with the Salem Center and through his speech on and off campus.

RESPONSE: Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations, which are therefore denied.

14. Carlos Carvalho is another professor of business at the McCombs School and is also the Executive Director of the Salem Center for Public Policy, where he collaborates with Lowery on evidence-based approaches to policy issues, including market-based approaches that consider trade-offs. Their work does not utilize critical race theory or other principles based on DEI ideology.

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that Professor Carvalho is on the faculty of the McCombs School and leads the Salem Center. Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations, which are therefore denied.

15. Lowery is a Senior Scholar at the Salem Center and reports to Carvalho. Lowery receives additional pay due to his affiliation with the Salem Center, as well as prestige and access to research opportunities.

RESPONSE: Admit.

16. In 2021, Lowery and Carvalho decided to pursue funding for a new “Liberty Institute” at UT, to provide a place for the study of classical-liberal, pro- free market viewpoints on a campus, as a counterweight to the dominant critical race theory and DEI-based ideology that was metastasizing from its origins in the humanities into more evidence-based disciplines such as business, economics, and STEM disciplines.

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that an entity to be called “Liberty Institute” was proposed. Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph, which are therefore denied.

17. Their goal was for the Liberty Institute to remain independent within UT, without having to answer to the general faculty within existing schools, so as to avoid becoming subject to the ideological bias inherent in most academic hiring decisions at UT, where DEI filtering mechanisms are applied, which result in the removal of candidates who dissent from DEI ideology and critical race theory.

RESPONSE: Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations in this paragraph, which are therefore denied.

18. The two enlisted the support of UT President Hartzell and private donors.

RESPONSE: Defendants admit the two contacted President Hartzell but deny that they “enlisted” President Hartzell’s support. Defendants otherwise lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations, which are therefore denied.

19. The Texas legislature’s 2022-23 state budget allocated \$6 million in funding for the Liberty Institute, which also garnered support from private donors.

RESPONSE: Admit.

20. But the enabling legislation was somewhat vague, which allowed President Hartzell and his allies in the UT Administration to hijack the project, remove its independence, re-direct its funding to existing personnel and programs, and change its title to “Civitas.”

RESPONSE: Defendants deny the allegations in this paragraph.

21. On June 8, 2022, Lowery was quoted in the *Texas Tribune*, criticizing President Hartzell and another member of the UT Administration: “The President of UT, in coordination with one of his chief deputies, Richard Flores, chose to completely default on the plan agreed to for bringing needed intellectual diversity to campus and push back against the persistent attacks on free inquiry and academic freedom at UT-Austin.” Kate McGee, *Professors behind conservative-backed “Liberty Institute” say UT has strayed from plan*, THE TEXAS TRIBUNE (June 8, 2022), <http://bit.ly/409vZ3W>.

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that Plaintiff’s view was quoted in the article. Otherwise, denied.

22. On July 1, 2022, Lowery again expressed his opinions about the hijacking of the Liberty Institute, criticizing the role of UT President Hartzell and Richard Flores, who is an advocate of critical race theory and DEI-ideology. Richard Lowery, *How UT-Austin Administrators Destroyed an Intellectual Diversity Initiative*, MARTIN CENTER FOR ACADEMIC RENEWAL (July 1, 2022),

<http://bit.ly/3kMhO4S>. (“During this time, UT’s president put a critical race theorist in charge of developing the Liberty Institute”). Lowery concluded his opinion article with a call for outside intervention to help establish viewpoint diversity: “[W]ith the current administration at UT, nothing will be possible without far more direct state intervention.”

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that Plaintiff’s view was quoted in the article. Otherwise, denied.

23. Later in July 2022, Professor Lowery appeared on The Center for the Study of Partisanship and Ideology’s (CSPI) podcast to join its President, Richard Hanania, to talk about the Liberty Institute controversy. CSPI Podcast, *Lessons from the Frontlines of the University Wars | Richard Lowery & Richard Hanania* (last visited January 26, 2023), <https://youtu.be/F9JB3a3viGU>. Hanania is also a visiting scholar at the Salem Center.

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that Professor Lowery appeared on the podcast identified. Richard Hanania’s term as a visiting scholar at the Salem Center expired after Lowery filed his complaint, so otherwise the statement that Hanania “is a visiting scholar at the Salem Center” is denied. Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph, which are therefore denied.

24. During the podcast, Lowery criticized UT’s Administrators, including President Hartzell. Lowery repeatedly opined that part of Hartzell’s job was lying to Republican office holders in Texas in order to minimize viewpoint-diversity problems at UT. Lowery also repeatedly criticized what he termed fake conservatives on campus, who he said have assisted establishment leftists in derailing viewpoint-diversity efforts at UT. He was also generally critical of UT’s use of DEI-ideology to filter merit-based candidates for academic and administrative posts.

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that Plaintiff made the assertions listed. Defendants deny the substance of the assertions, and the remainder of the paragraph, including that Plaintiff was expressing opinions when he made his factually inaccurate statements regarding how institutional leadership perform their functions.

25. Lowery has used his Twitter account with the handle @RichardLoweryTX to express

his views on the UT Administration and other issues by authoring tweets, and sometimes by re-tweeting or replying to posts by other users. Initially, all of Lowery's posts were publicly available to be viewed by any other Twitter user.

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that at some prior period, Plaintiff's tweets were publicly available. Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph, which are therefore denied.

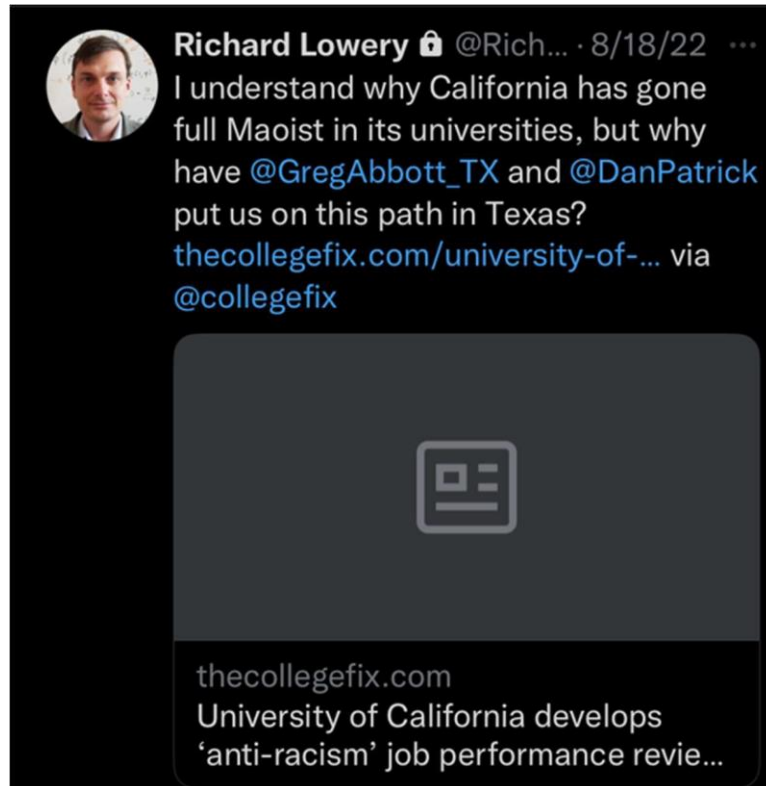
26. He has sometimes tagged elected officials or social-media personalities in his tweets, which makes his postings visible to those officials on Twitter.

RESPONSE: Admit.

27. Further information about the functionality of tweeting, re-tweeting, and replying, can be found at TWITTER, *New user FAQ* (last visited Jan. 31, 2023), <https://help.twitter.com/en/resources/new-user-faq>.

RESPONSE: This link is "dead" therefore, Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations, which are therefore denied.

28. On August 18, 2022, Lowery tweeted about an article regarding new DEI-ideology based job performance reviews in the University of California system, tagging Texas Governor Greg Abbott's Twitter account, and also Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick's Twitter account. He pointedly asked why those elected officials had put Texas on the same path, a reference to the UT Administration's expanding use of DEI filtering criteria at UT.



RESPONSE: Defendants admit that the picture appears to be a tweet by Richard Lowery that tags the Governor and Lieutenant Governor. Otherwise, denied.

Professor Lowery's pointed critiques of the Global Sustainability Leadership Institute

29. The McCombs School hosts a Global Sustainability Leadership Institute (“GSLI” or “Sustainability Institute”), which promotes Environment Sustainability and Governance (“ESG”) based viewpoints that are consistent with the predominant DEI-ideology at UT and are often at odds with free-market principles and Lowery’s views.

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that the GSLI is in McCombs. Otherwise, denied.

30. Per its director, Meeta Kothare, GSLI’s goal is to create leaders “who will create a regenerative, inclusive world in their own lifetime.”

RESPONSE: Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegation, which is therefore denied.

31. Richard Lowery believes that the Sustainability Institute is designed to train activists to

use corporations to promote DEI-based ideology. He believes that ESG serves a similar purpose: to hijack corporations to propagate ideological goals. He also believes that the Sustainability Institute promotes a worldview and academic approach that is at least partially antithetical to his own free-market philosophy and academic approach, and is also hostile to the academic values, approaches, and studies emphasized by the Salem Center.

RESPONSE: Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of these allegations, which are therefore denied.

32. Lowery has criticized the Sustainability Institute and its events using his Twitter account.

RESPONSE: Admit.

33. On April 11, 2022, Lowery tweeted a photo of a Sustainability Institute flyer touting the institute's "Global Sustainability Minor." Lowery commented that the minor was promoting "left-wing activism" and criticized the perceived hypocrisy of its supporters, stating, "These people are shameless and awful."



Richard Lowery @RichardLoweryTX · Apr 11

...

We literally have a minor in promoting left-wing activism through business, and people on the faculty council are mad that Scott Atlas was allowed to give a talk and I criticize CRT because that is “political” and not academic. These people are shameless and awful.



RESPONSE: Admit that Lowery made this tweet. Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph, which are therefore denied.

34. On August 22, 2022, Lowery tweeted a photo of a display promoting a Sustainability Institute event called, “Impact Chat: ESG under Attack.” Lowery criticized the featuring of two ESG proponents, and compared the panel’s lack of balance with his own efforts to include dissenting views at Salem Center events.

← Tweet



Richard Lowery
@RichardLoweryTX

And yet we at @saalemcenterUT are the ones who get attacked for not being balanced enough or whatever, even though we invite f***ing communists who support the murder of the Romanov children to debate.



RESPONSE: Admit that Plaintiff made this tweet. Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph, which are therefore denied.

“We need to do something about Richard”

35. Lowery’s repeated criticisms of the UT Administration, their DEI initiatives, and the Sustainability Institute drew the attention of Defendants, who decided to pressure Lowery and his friend and ally, Carlos Carvalho, into censoring Lowery’s speech.

RESPONSE: Defendants deny the allegations in this paragraph.

36. In a late July or early August 2022 conversation, Defendant Titman told Carvalho,

“We need to do something about Richard.” He added that President Hartzell and Dean Mills were upset about Lowery’s political advocacy, and wanted to know if “we can ask him to tone it down?”

RESPONSE: Defendants deny the allegations in this paragraph.

37. Carvalho understood this as an implicit threat, but he refused to do anything. Carvalho explained to Defendant Titman that Lowery has a First Amendment right to express himself.

RESPONSE: Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of these allegations, which are therefore denied.

38. Defendants decided to ratchet up the pressure. In mid-August 2022, Defendants Mills and Burris met with Carvalho to discuss the Salem Center. The first part of their meeting was routine, but after about an hour, the tone shifted when Mills and Burris changed the subject to Lowery’s speech.

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that Dean Mills and Dean Burris met with Professor Carvalho in mid-August 2022 to discuss the Salem Center. Defendants deny the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

39. Mills and Burris claimed that Lowery was “crossing the line” in his criticism of school officials, to the point where the UT legal department was allegedly concerned about his speech. When Carvalho asked them for examples of such speech, Dean Mills pointed to Lowery’s podcast interview with Richard Hanania about the Liberty Institute controversy. Mills advised Carvalho to “work with Richard [Lowery]” about his speech.

RESPONSE: Defendants deny the allegations in this paragraph.

40. When Carvalho declined to pressure Lowery to modify his speech, the deans’ approach shifted to suggestions that Lowery was impeding Carvalho’s ability to do his job, and that Lowery’s association with Carvalho and the Salem Center was “problematic.” The deans insisted that something should be done about Lowery, Associate Dean Burris telling Carvalho, “You have the power to have him not be attached to the center,” a reference to the fact that Burris and Carvalho must both annually

review Lowery's contract with the Salem Center.

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that Professor Carvalho must appoint Plaintiff to the Salem Center annually and that Dean Burriss approves appointments made to academic centers in the McCombs School. Defendants deny the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

41. When Carvalho again resisted calls to discipline Lowery over his speech, Dean Mills threatened to remove Carvalho from his Executive Director post, telling him, "I don't need to remind you that you serve at my pleasure," and stated that she did not care that Carvalho was the one who primarily raised money for the center.

RESPONSE: Defendants deny the allegations in this paragraph.

42. In another meeting, in late August 2022, in Associate Dean Burriss's office, Burriss asked for Carvalho's opinion about their previous conversation. Carvalho stated that he had felt threatened, to which Burriss responded by attempting to recharacterize the conversation, stating, "No, I wouldn't interpret it that way, he's [Lowery] hurting you." Burriss did not retract any of his prior threats.

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that Dean Burriss and Professor Carvalho had a conversation in late August 2022. Defendants deny the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

43. In another meeting in Burriss's office, on or about October 17, 2022, Burriss stressed to Carvalho the importance of "civility" while also reminding Carvalho that Burriss is the one who must approve Lowery's compensation and ultimately oversees the Salem Center. Although he had just renewed Lowery's annual appointment, Burriss told Carvalho that he might not approve Lowery's appointment to the center in the future because of his speech.

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that Professor Carvalho reappointed Plaintiff to the Salem Center in 2022 and that Dean Burriss approved that reappointment. Defendants deny the remaining allegations in this paragraph.

44. Carvalho understood that Titman, Mills, and Burriss all wanted him to pressure Lowery to temper his political and academic speech, and to convey to him that his relationship with the Salem

Center was in danger if he did not do so. He relayed Titman, Mills, and Burris's threats to Lowery, as they requested and expected that he would.

RESPONSE: Deny that this statement accurately reflects Titman, Mills, and Burris's actions. As to the rest of the statement, Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of these allegations, which are therefore denied.

The Sustainability Institute seeks to suppress dangerous ideas

45. On August 22, 2022, GSLI's Managing Director, Meeta Kothare, an anti-free market activist, emailed Lowery's tweet criticizing the institute's ESG event to Dean Mills and GSLI's Executive Director, Jeffrey Hales. The email's subject line was, "Lowery's tweets have started again" suggesting that Kothare, Mills, and Hales had previously discussed Lowery's tweets.

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that Kothare sent an email to Dean Mills on August 22, 2022 and that this paragraph accurately quotes the subject line of the email. Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations, which are therefore denied.

46. Addressing Dean Mills in the email, Kothare added, "Lil . . . I'm becoming very concerned about the safety of our events at this rate. The tweets start as soon as any poster about us goes up somewhere in the building." Betraying that her true objection to Lowery's tweet was not safety, she added, "Thankfully, this time he has not tagged some politician."

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that this paragraph accurately quotes the portions of the email that appear in quotation marks in the paragraph. Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations, which are therefore denied.

47. Kothare then forwarded the email she had sent to Mills and Hales about Lowery to another finance professor, Laura Starks, asking, "Do our finance colleagues know about this? Should Sheridan [Titman] be told? This is an ongoing story. At what point will he [Lowery] stir up real trouble?"

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that this paragraph accurately quotes the portions of the email that appear in quotation marks in the paragraph.

48. Starks, in turn, forwarded the email chain to defendant Titman. "Please see issue

below. Given the political mood in the country today, this is not acceptable and is potentially quite dangerous.”

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that the paragraph accurately quotes an email Starks sent to Titman.

49. Titman responded, “We should have a discussion of what is appropriate on twitter – we want to encourage intellectual discourse, but I don’t think rude comments are acceptable.”

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that this paragraph accurately quotes an email from Titman.

50. In another email, Kothare complained to Titman that Lowery had criticized her institute’s sustainability minor and sometimes tagged elected officials.

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that Professor Kothare and Professor Titman exchanged emails. Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations, which are therefore denied.

51. Defendant Titman responded to Kothare’s censorship demands by forwarding Lowery the original email Kothare sent to Dean Mills, omitting the header so that Lowery could not see the sender. He could tell only that Mills was the recipient, as that email opened by addressing “Lil.”

RESPONSE: Defendants admit Titman forwarded to Lowery the original email Kothare sent to Mills. Defendants deny that Professor Titman received a censorship demand from Professor Kothare. Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations, which are therefore denied.

52. Along with the forwarded email, Titman wrote Lowery, “You don’t seem to be making friends. It is probably in your interest to come up with a class for the Spring that is likely to be popular . . . In any event, the appropriate response is to jointly sponsor a panel discussion on ESG.”

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that this paragraph accurately quotes portions of the email from Professor Titman to Plaintiff.

53. Lowery responded, “I consider this a threat. I can certainly criticize events.”

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that Lowery wrote that statement, but Defendants otherwise deny that any threat was made.

54. As a result of Titman's threats, as well as those of Mills and Burris, Lowery set his Twitter account to "private," meaning that only his followers could see his tweets, replies, and re-tweets, not the general public. Setting his account to "private" also reduces the reach of any commentary Lowery posted on Twitter or might in the future post on Twitter.

RESPONSE: Defendants deny that any threats were made. Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations, which are therefore denied.

55. He also stopped tweeting altogether as of late August 2022, although he has not deleted his account and would like to resume tweeting, re-tweeting, replying to other posts, and otherwise commenting on matters as before.

RESPONSE: Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegations, which are therefore denied.

The Sustainability Institute asks UT police to surveil Lowery's speech

56. Two days after Kothare lobbied to have UT Administrators censor Lowery, another Sustainability Institute employee, Madison Gove, emailed UT police officer Joseph Bishop, referencing a conversation that they had about Lowery.

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that Madison Gove sent an email to UT police officer Joseph Bishop. Otherwise, denied.

57. Gove wrote "His name is Richard Lowery . . . [a]s mentioned, we are more worried about the people he reaches than him. Some of his supporters are authors, podcasters, and politicians... Unfortunately, he switched his account to private mode today, so I cannot give you anything other than what I have. Perhaps you all can see more. The link is <https://twitter.com/RichardLoweryTX>."

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that the paragraph accurately quotes an email from Gove to Officer Bishop.

58. Gove also provided Officer Bishop with screenshots of Lowery's tweets, which she

had gathered before he had set his account to private.

RESPONSE: Admit.

59. Kothare and other UT administrators were copied on Gove's email to the UT police requesting surveillance of Lowery's speech. There is no indication that any UT administrator withdrew the request for police surveillance.

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that individuals employed by UT were copied on the email identified. Defendants deny the remaining allegations in this paragraph, including that a "request for police surveillance" was made.

The impact of Defendants' threats on Lowery's speech

60. Due to Defendants' threats to punish him for his political commentary and criticism of the UT Administration, Professor Lowery does not believe he is free to continue expressing his views openly.

RESPONSE: Defendants deny that any threats were made or that Plaintiff was at risk of being punished. Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations in this paragraph, which are therefore denied.

61. Lowery reasonably fears that if he continues to offer public commentary that is critical of the UT Administration and its policies, Defendants will not renew his appointment to the Salem Center, costing him the \$20,000 annual stipend that comes with that position, and possibly take other adverse actions.

RESPONSE: Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegation that Lowery fears Defendants. Defendants deny the remaining allegations in this paragraph, including that any fear of Lowery's is reasonable.

62. Lowery also fears that if he continues to speak publicly, Defendants will remove his supervisory role at the Policy Research Lab, and the opportunities to publish academic research that the Policy Research Lab generates for Lowery.

RESPONSE: Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegation that Lowery fears Defendants. Defendants deny the

remaining allegations in this paragraph, including that any fear of Lowery's is reasonable.

63. The loss of research opportunities would be professionally devastating, since Lowery's primary research has been curtailed by the significant efforts he expends on the Salem Center's behalf.

RESPONSE: Defendants deny the allegations in this paragraph.

64. Having recently discovered Gove's email to the UT police, Lowery is further concerned that Defendants will attempt to label Lowery as lacking civility, being dangerous, violent, or in need of police surveillance, especially if he publicly criticizes the UT Administration or contacts elected officials.

RESPONSE: Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegation that Lowery actually has any such concern. Defendants deny the remaining allegations in this paragraph, including that any concern of Lowery's is reasonable.

65. Lowery further fears that Defendants will find various additional pretexts for punishing him for his speech, because they are embarrassed and irritated by his criticisms and the fact that he is informing elected officials about events at UT, that cast the UT Administration in a negative light.

RESPONSE: Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the allegation that Lowery fears Defendants. Defendants deny the remaining allegations in this paragraph, including that any fear of Lowery's is reasonable.

66. Lowery would continue speaking his mind about political and academic matters, including criticizing the UT Administration, DEI policies, the Sustainability Institute and the hijacking of the Liberty Institute. But he refrains from doing so because he believes Defendants will make good on their threats, including ending his affiliation with the Salem Center, cutting his pay, accusing him of incivility, equating his opinions with inciting violence, and placing him under police surveillance.

RESPONSE: Defendants deny that they have made any threats or that Lowery has refrained from speaking out. Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations, which are therefore denied.

67. On account of Defendants' threats, Lowery has locked his Twitter account, significantly reducing his audience, and making his speech on that platform generally unavailable to the public. He has also stopped using Twitter entirely and has curtailed his public speech critical of the UT Administration because of Defendants' threats.

RESPONSE: Defendants deny the allegations in this paragraph.

68. For example, Lowery served on the organizing committee for a recent Stanford University conference exploring freedom of speech on campus and had planned to use his appearance at that conference to criticize the UT Administration's handling of the Liberty Institute affair and the hostility of UT's environment for free speech. But fearing retaliation by Defendants, who had already threatened him over similar speech, Lowery instead spoke about free speech issues at private universities.

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that Lowery spoke at the event after claiming his speech was chilled. Defendants deny that Lowery's speech was limited to criticisms of private universities. Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations, which are therefore denied.

69. Similarly, he asked that an October 2022 symposium in Washington, D.C., called "Reversing Ideological Capture of Universities," that he had participated in, and helped organize, not be made public.

RESPONSE: Defendants admit that Lowery spoke at the event after claiming his speech was chilled. Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of these allegations, which are therefore denied.

70. In addition, to teaching and conducting research, Lowery believes that part of his job as a UT academic is to comment on university affairs, including UT's policies, UT Administrator's actions, spending priorities, academic freedom, tolerance for viewpoint diversity, even when those topics do not directly relate to his teaching or published research.

RESPONSE: Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of Plaintiff's alleged views of his job duties, which are therefore denied.

71. Lowery has observed that other UT faculty are able to comment freely in support of DEI initiatives without getting threatened by UT Administrators. Sometimes their speech is even subsidized and encouraged by UT. For example, the UT Provost's Office offers grants to support projects on campus that promote DEI.

RESPONSE: Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about how Plaintiff perceived others. Otherwise, denied.

72. A description of the Provost's grant program to promote DEI ideology can be found at University of Texas, *New Grants Empower Campus Community to Lead Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Projects* (last visited February 5, 2023), <http://bit.ly/3Xexwi4>"\h.

RESPONSE: This link is "dead," moreover Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of these allegations, which are therefore denied.

IV. COUNT ONE

FIRST AMENDMENT RIGHT OF FREE SPEECH, 42 U.S.C. § 1983 CHILLING OF FREE SPEECH BY STATE ACTORS

73. Professor Lowery realleges and incorporates paragraphs 1 through 72.

RESPONSE: This paragraph does not require a responsive pleading, but to the extent it does, Defendants incorporate their prior responses.

74. Lowery's public criticism of the UT Administration, its DEI policies, its hijacking of the Liberty Institute; as well as his criticism of the Sustainability Institute, its minor, and its ESG panel, all constitute protected speech on matters of public concern. And to the extent that Lowery speaks about academic affairs on campus, his doing so is part and parcel of his traditional role as a university professor.

RESPONSE: Whether certain speech is protected by the First Amendment is a legal conclusion to which no responsive pleading is required. Defendants deny anyone "hijack[ed] [] the Liberty Institute." Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations, which are therefore denied.

75. Lowery has a legally protected right to voice his criticisms of the UT Administration

on the Sustainability Institute to elected officials in Texas state government, including petitioning them for a redress of his grievances with regard to spending of public funds for ideological indoctrination at UT.

RESPONSE: Whether certain speech is protected by the First Amendment is a legal conclusion to which no responsive pleading is required. Defendants deny the implication that there has been a use of “public funds for ideological indoctrination” at UT. Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations, which are therefore denied.

76. The UT Administration may not prohibit Lowery from speaking to elected officials in Texas state government through the use of Twitter or other social media platforms, even if that embarrasses the UT administration.

RESPONSE: Whether certain speech is protected by the First Amendment is a legal conclusion to which no responsive pleading is required. Defendants deny that Lowery has been prohibited from speaking to public officials. Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations, which are therefore denied.

77. When speaking on matters of public concern, Lowery has a right to present his opinions in the way that he chooses, including in ways that others, including the majority of UT faculty, might find disagreeable or offensive.

RESPONSE: Whether certain speech is protected by the First Amendment is a legal conclusion to which no responsive pleading is required. Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations, which are therefore denied.

78. In addition, or in the alternative, Lowery also has a right to engage in the speech at issue in this case as part of his right to academic freedom and as a participant in the dialogue about university affairs.

RESPONSE: Whether certain speech is protected by the First Amendment or within the purview of academic freedom is a legal conclusion to which no responsive pleading is required. Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations, which are therefore denied.

79. Defendants’ threats to reduce Lowery’s pay, involuntarily end his affiliation with the

Salem Center, reduce his access to research opportunities, inquire about his tweets, label him, request that his speech be placed under police surveillance, or otherwise discipline him are designed to silence Lowery's criticisms or change the content of this speech to make it less critical, disagreeable, or offensive.

RESPONSE: Defendants deny the allegations in this paragraph.

80. In addition, or in the alternative, Defendants' threats also prospectively chill his right to academic freedom.

RESPONSE: Defendants deny the allegations in this paragraph.

81. Lowery has an intention to engage in future public criticism of the UT Administration, its DEI policies, its handling of the Liberty Institute, and its misuse of public funds for ideological purposes; as well as criticizing the Sustainability Institute and its activities; and the general lack of viewpoint diversity on the UT campus. He also has an intention to speak to elected officials in Texas state government about these issues via social media and other means.

RESPONSE: Admit that Plaintiff has spoken to Texas state officials many times during the period he claimed his speech was chilled. Defendants lack knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of the remaining allegations, which are therefore denied.

82. Lowery's intended conduct would reasonably subject him to further threats and the implementation of previous threats by Defendants.

RESPONSE: Defendants deny the allegations in this paragraph.

83. The risk of future threats and the implementation of previous threats is substantial.

RESPONSE: Defendants deny the allegations in this paragraph.

84. By chilling Professor Lowery's freedom of speech, Defendants, under color of law, violated and continue to violate Richard Lowery's free speech rights under the First and Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. Accordingly, Defendants injured Professor Lowery in

violation of 42 U.S.C. § 1983, and Lowery is entitled to declaratory and preliminary and permanent injunctive relief against the Defendants' misconduct; and attorney fees and expenses under 42 U.S.C. § 1988.

RESPONSE: Defendants deny the allegations in this paragraph.

V. COUNT TWO

FIRST AMENDMENT RIGHT OF FREE SPEECH, 42 U.S.C. § 1983 RETALIATION FOR PROTECTED SPEECH AS A CITIZEN AND ACADEMIC

85. Professor Lowery realleges and incorporates paragraphs 1 through 72.

RESPONSE: This paragraph does not require a responsive pleading because this count has been dismissed (*see* Order, ECF No. 51 (Sept. 5, 2023)); but to the extent a response is required, Defendants incorporate their prior responses.

86. Lowery's public criticism of the UT Administration, its DEI policies, its hijacking of the Liberty Institute, and its perceived misuse of public funds; as well as his criticism of the Sustainability Institute, its minor, and its ESG panel, all constitute protected speech by a citizen, especially when Lowery spoke in published opinion articles, on social media, or to elected officials.

RESPONSE: This paragraph does not require a responsive pleading because this count has been dismissed (*see* Order, ECF No. 51 (Sept. 5, 2023)); but to the extent a response is required, Defendants incorporate their prior responses and deny all other allegations in this paragraph.

87. In addition, or in the alternative, part of Lowery's job as an academic at UT is to critique ideas, policies, hiring, administrative decisions, the allocation of resources, and the general intellectual climate. Doing so allows Lowery to participate in the life of the mind and academic dialogue in a way that is also afforded to his leftwing peers, who do not share his conservative worldview. To the extent that Lowery's speech at issue in this case constituted speech within his job responsibilities, it was speech protected by the right to academic freedom.

RESPONSE: This paragraph does not require a responsive pleading because this count has been dismissed (*see* Order, ECF No. 51 (Sept. 5, 2023)); but to the extent a response is required, Defendants incorporate their prior responses and deny all other

allegations in this paragraph.

88. Defendants, individually, and in concert with each other acted to retaliate against Lowery for his protected speech because it was embarrassing to them and others in the UT administration and also because they feared the possibility of elected officials scrutinizing their behavior.

RESPONSE: This paragraph does not require a responsive pleading because this count has been dismissed (*see* Order, ECF No. 51 (Sept. 5, 2023)); but to the extent a response is required, Defendants incorporate their prior responses and deny all other allegations in this paragraph.

89. Defendants also retaliated against Lowery because they found his commentary offensive and thought that it offended other, more favored faculty at UT, whose worldview was more aligned with the majority of UT-faculty and the UT Administration's DEI ideology.

RESPONSE: This paragraph does not require a responsive pleading because this count has been dismissed (*see* Order, ECF No. 51 (Sept. 5, 2023)); but to the extent a response is required, Defendants incorporate their prior responses and deny all other allegations in this paragraph.

90. Defendants retaliated against Lowery for his protected speech by threatening to reduce Lowery's pay, involuntarily end his affiliation with the Salem Center, reduce his access to research opportunities, inquire about his tweets, labeling him, requesting that his speech be placed under police surveillance, or otherwise disciplining him.

RESPONSE: This paragraph does not require a responsive pleading because this count has been dismissed (*see* Order, ECF No. 51 (Sept. 5, 2023)); but to the extent a response is required, Defendants incorporate their prior responses and deny all other allegations in this paragraph.

91. Defendants' threats were such that a reasonable person in Lowery's position would refrain from speaking in the ways at issue in this case.

RESPONSE: This paragraph does not require a responsive pleading because this count has been dismissed (*see* Order, ECF No. 51 (Sept. 5, 2023)); but to the extent a response is required, Defendants incorporate their prior responses and deny all other allegations in this paragraph.

92. In addition, and in the alternative, to the extent the speech at issue in this case was speech that was part of Lowery's job responsibilities and protected by academic freedom, Defendants' threats against Lowery effectively removed an important part of his job duties by restricting his right to critique ideas, policies, hiring, administrative decisions, the allocation of resources, the general intellectual climate at UT, and to otherwise participate in the life of the mind and academic dialogue on terms equal to his peers on the faculty.

RESPONSE: This paragraph does not require a responsive pleading because this count has been dismissed (*see* Order, ECF No. 51 (Sept. 5, 2023)); but to the extent a response is required, Defendants incorporate their prior responses and deny all other allegations in this paragraph.

93. In addition, and in the alternative, the removal of these rights and job responsibilities amounted to an adverse employment action and a serious burden on the right to academic freedom.

RESPONSE: This paragraph does not require a responsive pleading because this count has been dismissed (*see* Order, ECF No. 51 (Sept. 5, 2023)); but to the extent a response is required, Defendants incorporate their prior responses and deny all other allegations in this paragraph.

94. By retaliating against Richard Lowery for his protected speech, Defendants, under color of law, violated and continue to violate Richard Lowery's free speech rights under the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution. Accordingly, Defendants injured Professor Lowery in violation of 42 U.S.C. § 1983, and Lowery is entitled to declaratory and preliminary and permanent injunctive relief against the Defendants' retaliatory misconduct; and attorney fees and expenses under 42 U.S.C. § 1988.

RESPONSE: This paragraph does not require a responsive pleading because this count has been dismissed (*see* Order, ECF No. 51 (Sept. 5, 2023)); but to the extent a response is required, Defendants incorporate their prior responses and deny all other allegations in this paragraph.

VI. PRAYER FOR RELIEF

Defendants deny that Plaintiff is entitled to the relief requested in his Prayer for Relief or any other relief.

VII. AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSES

1. Defendants plead the affirmative defense of sovereign immunity. Sovereign immunity bars Plaintiff's claims and deprives the Court of subject-matter jurisdiction over this case. *See* Motion to Dismiss, ECF No. 15.

2. Defendants further plead that Plaintiff's claims are not ripe (because he asserts speculative future injuries), and therefore the Court lacks subject-matter jurisdiction over this case. *See* Motion to Dismiss, ECF No. 15.

3. Defendants further plead that Plaintiff lacks standing (which he cannot create by voluntarily reducing his speech based upon a purported unreasonable fear of future harm), and therefore the Court lacks subject-matter jurisdiction over this case. *See* Motion to Dismiss, ECF No. 15.

4. Defendants further plead that Plaintiff fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted as to his chilled-speech claim. *See* Motion to Dismiss, ECF No. 15.

5. Defendants further plead that Plaintiff has suffered no actionable or compensable damage or injury.

6. Defendants further plead that Plaintiff's is not entitled to injunctive relief since there is no ongoing violation of law and that his request for injunctive relief would violate Defendants' rights under the First Amendment.

Respectfully submitted,

JACKSON WALKER LLP

By: /s/ Charles L. Babcock

Charles L. Babcock

Texas State Bar No. 01479500

cbabcock@jw.com

Joel R. Glover

Texas State Bar No. 24087593

jglover@jw.com

Javier Gonzalez

Texas State Bar No. 24119697

jgonzalez@jw.com

1401 McKinney Street, Suite 1900

Houston, Texas 77010

(713) 752-4200 – Phone

(713) 752-4221 – Fax

Matt Dow

Texas State Bar No. 06066500

mdow@jw.com

Adam W. Aston

Texas State Bar No. 24045423

aaston@jw.com

100 Congress Ave., Suite 1100

(512) 236-2056 – Phone

(512) 691-4456 – Fax

ATTORNEYS FOR DEFENDANTS

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on September 26, 2023, I caused a copy of the foregoing pleading to be served upon counsel of record for all parties via the Court's ECF system.

/s/ Charles L. Babcock

Charles L. Babcock