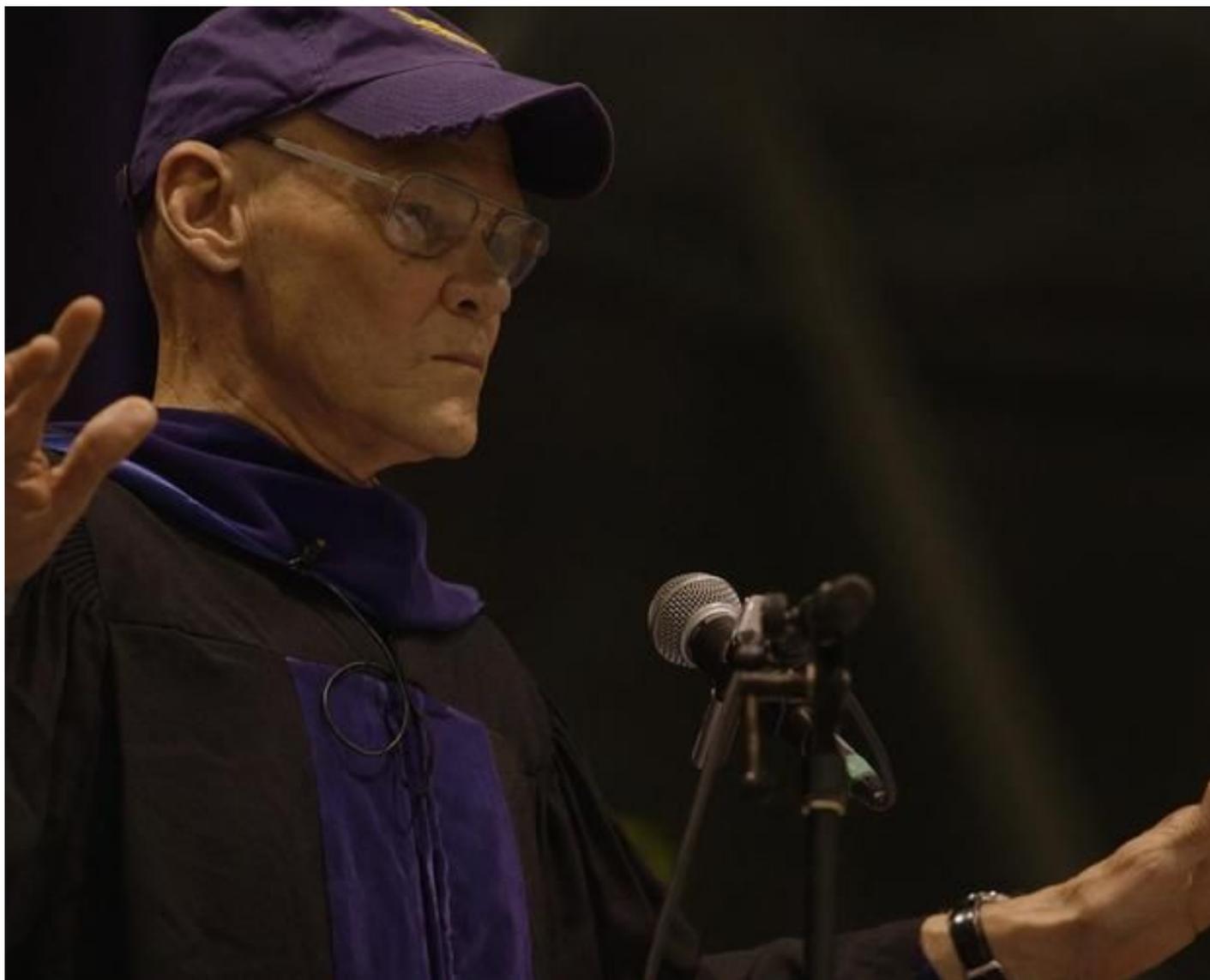


http://host.madison.com/ct/news/local/education/university/uw-featured-in-starving-the-beast-a-film-about-conservatives/article_ab0a3493-fe31-5ea0-9121-593521f8486b.html

UW featured in 'Starving the Beast,' a film about conservatives cutting higher ed funding

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Violet Crown Films

James Carville talks about the politics behind the conservative strategy to commodify public higher education in "Starving the Beast" documentary premiering at SXSW.

The politics behind Gov. Scott Walker's defunding of the University of Wisconsin and his moves to curtail tenure are explored in "Starving the Beast: The Battle to Disrupt and Reform America's Public Universities," a documentary that will have its world premiere March 13 at

SXSW in Austin, Texas.

It will also screen at this year's Wisconsin Film Festival, which begins on April 14 and runs for a week in Madison.

The title is a play on a term used to describe the conservative tactic of cutting taxes to force the federal government to reduce spending. In the context of the film, "starving the beast," means cutting funding to public universities to force them to fail and then blaming them for it.

The documentary, directed by Steve Mims, focuses on how the starvation strategy is playing out at the University of Wisconsin, University of Virginia, University of North Carolina, Louisiana State University, University of Texas and Texas A&M.

The trailer features Democratic political strategist James Carville talking about the political debate around public funding of public universities. Opponents of public funding "say that education is a commodity ... it's a barrel of oil, it's an ounce of gold, it's anything," Carville says.

News reports of Walker's characterization of funding cuts and tenure changes as "an Act 10 for UW" set up a news clip of him boasting: "Because of our reforms today, there is no tenure or seniority in our state." Act 10 was a 2011 law that gutted collective bargaining powers of Wisconsin public employees.

University leaders are being felled in the march of the philosophic shift to education as business, the trailer notes: University of Virginia president Teresa Sullivan, University of North Carolina president Tom Ross, Texas A&M chancellor Mike McKinney, and the University of Texas-Austin's chancellor Bill Powers.

Commentators talk about how as tenure is eroded, criticism of the government is labeled as political and beyond the realm of faculty duties. "Think of the vision of the First Amendment, free speech and academic freedom that's left, when professors cannot criticize the government," cautions one.

Parents looking for a top-notch education for their kids need to start looking at private universities, says another. "It's a tragedy really," he said.