Professor Fired, Escorted from Campus by Police over Mysterious ‘Sexual Harassment’ Charge Two Days after Complaining about Defects in Policy

The abuse of campus sexual harassment policies to punish dissenting professors has hit a new low at East Georgia College (EGC) in Swainsboro. Professor Thomas Thibeault made the mistake of pointing out—at a sexual harassment training seminar—that the school’s sexual harassment policy contained no protection for the falsely accused. Two days later, in a Kafkaesque irony, Thibeault was fired by the college president for sexual harassment without notice, without knowing his accuser or the charges against him, and without a hearing.

“"If you were to write a novel about the abuse of sexual harassment regulations to get rid of a dissenter, you couldn’t do better than the real-life story of Thomas Thibeault,” FIRE President Greg Lukianoff said. “Anyone with a modicum of respect for freedom of speech or simple fairness should be aghast at this blatant abuse of power by East Georgia College.”

Thibeault’s ordeal started shortly after he attended a faculty training session regarding the college’s sexual harassment policy on August 5, 2009. During the session, he presented a scenario involving another professor and asked, “What provision is there in the Sexual Harassment policy to protect the accused against complaints that are malicious or, in this case, ridiculous?” When Vice President for Legal Affairs Mary Smith, who was conducting the session, replied that no such provision to protect the accused existed, Thibeault responded, “Then the policy itself is flawed.”

Two days later, Thibeault was summoned to EGC President John Bryant Black’s office. According to Thibeault’s written account of the meeting, which was sent to Black and which Black has not disputed, Thibeault met with Black and Smith. Black told Thibeault that he “was a divisive force in the college at a time when the college needed unity” and that Thibeault must resign by 11:30 a.m. or be fired and have his “long history of sexual harassment … made public.” This unsubstantiated allegation took Thibeault by surprise. Black added that Thibeault would be escorted off campus by Police Chief Drew Durden and that Black had notified the local police that he was prepared to have Thibeault arrested for trespassing if he returned to campus. At no point was Thibeault presented with the charges against him or given any chance to present a defense. Refusing to resign, Thibeault understood that he was fired.

Black most likely realized that he had fired Thibeault without any of the due process mandated by Georgia’s Board of Regents, for he quickly began attempting to justify Thibeault’s firing after the fact. On August 11, Black wrote Thibeault to say that since Thibeault had failed to resign by the deadline, “EGC [had] begun dismissal proceedings. … [A] faculty committee [had] been appointed to conduct an informal inquiry.” He then paradoxically wrote, “Their charge is to advise me whether or not dismissal proceedings shall be undertaken.” Thibeault still had not been provided with any charges, still was banned from campus, and still appeared to be fired—with the “dismissal proceedings” occurring after the fact.

Then, on August 25, Black wrote Thibeault again, claiming for the first time that Thibeault had actually been suspended, not fired: “the committee’s finding was that

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Over eight years ago, I was hired to work for a small nonprofit in Philadelphia that few had ever heard of. It went by the audacious and ambitious name of FIRE. A couple of weeks before my first day, I flew in from San Francisco to find an apartment in what would become my new home. I landed at the Philadelphia airport at 9:10 AM on September 11, 2001.

Of course, I would soon discover that this was a day that would dramatically transform American and world history. Planes were grounded for the rest of that week, so I was left to ponder the frightening ramifications of that strange and terrible day mostly alone in an unfamiliar city. It also meant that I spent more time than I had anticipated with the tiny FIRE staff before my first day. I was deeply impressed at the quite remarkable mix of religious, political, and philosophical backgrounds represented by the staff. When I started as FIRE’s first Director of Legal and Public Advocacy a few weeks later, I was further impressed by the rigor, principle, and grand vision that co-founder Alan Charles Kors brought to the office.

In the wake of 9/11, in my first days of working for FIRE, I was able to see these ideals at work. I wrote letters on behalf of two professors who were being forced out of their jobs, one for making an admittedly insensitive joke about the attack on the Pentagon and another for saying, in his politics class, that Muslims who did not condemn Islamic terrorism were tacitly supporting it. Indeed, it was eye-opening for me to discover that even as Ground Zero smoldered and American flags flew everywhere, on college campuses, one was decidedly more likely to get in trouble for speech that was aggressively pro-American or anti-terrorist than for speech that was unpatriotic. In one famous case, students were made to take down American flags, American eagles, and images of Osama bin Laden in cross hairs because residence life officials assumed that some other students would find them offensive.

In those early days, there seemed to be someone working on cases in the FIRE office at all hours of the day and night. Every case was a hard fight, requiring a constant coordination of argument, outreach, factual analysis, legal research, campaigning, and engaging the media. Every case was an uphill battle; we were a tiny organization fighting an academic industry with billions of dollars at its disposal. Every case on behalf of student and faculty rights was fought hard, and every victory was sweet.

This year, I celebrate my fourth year as president of FIRE. While many things have changed, much remains the same. Although FIRE has grown substantially, it is still a small organization fighting a multi-billion-dollar industry that shows little respect for the rights, autonomy, and even private conscience of students and faculty members. Every victory is still sweet and hard-fought. I am proud that our record of successes has grown and grown. Over the past ten years, FIRE has secured 155 public victories at 118 colleges and universities with a total enrollment of more than 2.5 million students, and we are directly responsible for changing 77 unconstitutional or repressive policies affecting more than 1.5 million students. I never forget that at the heart of each of these victories is a student, faculty member, or group of students who would have been denied their most basic rights had Alan Charles Kors and Harvey Silverglate not founded FIRE ten years ago.

I hope you will join us in celebrating FIRE’s ten years of fighting for our most basic American rights on campus, and I ask you to help us spread the word that absurd and atrocious violations of student and faculty rights happen with shocking frequency at those very institutions purportedly most committed to a free and open exchange of ideas. The more people who recognize that these violations are actually occurring, the better chance we will have in succeeding in our greatest goal: to change the culture on campus. Instead of universities that treat individual rights like an impediment to progress, we hope for the realization that individual rights and liberty are essential not only in education but also to the success of our free, liberal, pluralistic, democratic Republic.

Happy birthday, FIRE!

Greg Lukianoff
“FIRE is using every medium at its disposal to warn students and parents about colleges that have shown ongoing and unapologetic disregard for basic rights,” said FIRE President Greg Lukianoff. “From the U.S. News Best Colleges issue and its year-round guidebook to aggressive campaigns in more than 30 of the nation’s top student newspapers and through social networking sites, FIRE will be talking about the issue of free expression on campus everywhere students and parents turn this fall.”

This year’s U.S. News advertisement highlights the shocking story of Keith John Sampson, a student at Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) who was found guilty of racial harassment simply for reading a book about how Notre Dame students defeated the Ku Klux Klan in a 1924 street fight. Sampson ultimately cleared his name with FIRE’s help, but the fact that an American university was willing to call the act of reading a book “harassment” highlights the disturbing repression that is all too common in academia today.

In the first issue of the school year, the newspapers of the six Red Alert institutions will run large advertisements from FIRE intended to remind students about their institutions’ attacks on their freedom and warn new students about the repressive culture on campus. Newspapers at 25 of America’s largest and most prestigious universities will run FIRE ads inviting students and professors to become members of FIRE’s Campus Freedom Network, where they can join thousands of others working to reform their campuses for liberty. Readers of the official U.S. News college guidebook, which will be on newsstands for twelve months, will see an advertisement for FIRE’s Spotlight speech code database, where they can discover the state of free speech at more than 400 universities. FIRE will also harness the power of the Internet and utilize Facebook, Twitter, USNews.com, and our blog, The Torch, to spread our message to the public. This unprecedented public awareness campaign was made possible in part by a grant from the Arthur N. Rupe Foundation.

“One of the challenges in FIRE’s work is overcoming skepticism that atrocious abuses of freedom of speech and expression could be taking place in those institutions that claim to honor them the most: our colleges and universities,” said Lukianoff. “I ask every reader out there to forward the facts about Sampson’s case and the cases at the Red Alert schools to their friends, relatives, colleagues, and classmates. The more who understand how badly student rights are abused on campus, the more powerful will be the movement for reform and the protection of student and faculty rights. FIRE can only achieve its goals with your help.”
The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) has withdrawn its unconstitutional demand that a former student take down a website criticizing the university. Tom Wilde turned to FIRE for help after UCLA demanded that he shut down his private, non-commercial website, ucla-weeding101.info. Merely a few hours after FIRE publicized Wilde’s case, UCLA informed FIRE that its demands against Wilde were being withdrawn.

On August 18, Jasper notified FIRE that FIRE’s letter was under review and that she “anticipate[d] having a fuller response ... in the very near future.” Yesterday, FIRE took the case public; within hours, Jasper faxed FIRE to say that, while the university would appreciate more changes to the site, “[i]n any event, the University hereby withdraws the demands made upon Mr. Wilde in our letter to him of August 6, 2009.”

This latest controversy over online speech is nothing new at California’s public colleges. FIRE prevented a similar effort by the University of California, Santa Barbara in 2005 to misuse the same section of the California Education Code to shut down the site www.thedarksideofucsb.com. The site criticized what the site’s owner perceived as UCSB’s acceptance of a dangerous and lawless campus culture.

“Kudos to UCLA for quickly realizing that the First Amendment protects criticism of the university—even online,” FIRE President Greg Lukianoff said. “UCLA’s prompt and welcome recognition of the First Amendment freedoms at stake should send a powerful message to other California public colleges that have made similar threats, such as Santa Rosa Junior College, that the law does not support their position.”

Continued from front cover story

there is sufficient evidence to support your suspension.” Black added that Thibeault was about to be terminated for sexual harassment, that the charges finally would be sent upon request, and that Thibeault finally could request a hearing. Thibeault requested the charges on August 28 but has received no response. His lawyer also has inquired for weeks with no response.

“How can a public college professor in the United States be fired and kicked off campus by the president and police but, more than a month later, still have no idea why?” asked Adam Kissel, Director of FIRE’s Individual Rights Defense Program. “Do Georgia’s taxpayers know this is how their colleges are treating their professors?”

FIRE outlined many of these shocking violations of due process and freedom of speech in a letter to University System of Georgia Chancellor Erroll B. Davis, Jr. on August 27, with copies to Black and Smith. None of them has responded. Neither Black nor Smith has even bothered to comment on the discrepancies between Thibeault’s account and Black’s erratic letters.

“It is hard to imagine a worse failure of due process in this case,” Kissel said. “Nobody knows what the actual allegations are because they are being kept secret, even from Thibeault himself. In the stunning absence of any charges, evidence, or hearings, it is clear that EGC has punished Professor Thibeault for speaking out against a flawed harassment policy.”

More than 100 people from around the country have joined FIRE in writing to President Black and Chancellor Davis, asking for the university to bring justice for Thibeault and reverse the vindictive actions of the EGC administration. The case has also garnered national media attention from sources such as Inside Higher Ed and The Chronicle of Higher Education, along with numerous blogs across the blogosphere.

Victory for Free Expression: UCLA Drops Unconstitutional Threats Against Internet Speech
Mandatory ‘Diversity Accomplishments’ at Virginia Tech Violate Faculty Rights; FIRE Details Violations in 15-page Letter to Board of Visitors

FIRE has sent the Virginia Tech (VT) Board of Visitors a 15-page letter with 13 enclosures detailing how VT administrators have begun to demand “diversity accomplishments” from faculty members across the university over the past several years. Professors are expected to alter their own research, teaching, and personal intellectual development in order to prove their loyalty to VT’s political agenda. Those who lack the right “diversity accomplishments” will see diminished career prospects, including the likelihood of tenure and promotion. FIRE is calling on the Board of Visitors to rescind the coercive elements of VT’s diversity agenda.

In FIRE’s September 14, 2009 letter to John R. Lawson, II, Rector of the VT Board of Visitors, FIRE clearly states that it takes no position on the university’s diversity agenda. FIRE does, however, strongly oppose the coercive means being used to accomplish this agenda. Copies of the letter were also sent to all VT department chairs and to several elected officials of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

FIRE first became involved in this issue in March, after a faculty member wrote to FIRE about proposed changes to faculty assessment policies at VT’s College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences (CLAHS). FIRE wrote President Charles Steger and engaged other national higher education organizations, particularly the National Association of Scholars (NAS), to fight the coercive elements of the changes. By mid-April, the proposal was withdrawn pending further review.

At the time that it withdrew the CLAHS proposal, VT stated that “The fundamental problem was a requirement to produce materials in support of diversity.” (Emphasis in original.) It is now clear, however, that VT was trying to fool FIRE and the public with its apparent acquiescence, for it maintained a similar university-wide requirement.

As FIRE wrote in its letter, Virginia Tech must not tell its professors what they must believe, or even what they should believe, or the process of honest intellectual inquiry and innovation will end before it even starts. Must VT instructors who do not share the university’s assumptions about bias, race, gender, and culture be made exceptions to the ringing declarations of the meaning and value of true academic freedom that Virginia Tech’s own promises and statements expound?

America has room for universities that require students and faculty members to agree to support a particular religious or political agenda. However, this power is (for good reason) forbidden to educational institutions run by the government. To its shame, VT seems to have ignored this fact. VT must stop pressuring and requiring faculty members to change their personal and intellectual work to conform to the university’s diversity agenda. FIRE looks forward to seeing Virginia Tech’s response.

FIRE Joins Open Letter to Yale Protesting Censorship of Mohammed Cartoons

FIRE has joined a dynamic coalition of civil liberties groups in signing an open letter protesting the removal of cartoons depicting Mohammed from author Jytte Klausen’s forthcoming book, The Cartoons That Shook the World, to be published by Yale University Press this October. The letter, authored by Joan Bertin, Executive Director of the National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) and sent to Yale President Richard C. Levin and members of the Yale Corporation, labels the removal of the cartoons “a dangerous precedent that threatens academic and intellectual freedom around the world.”

In addition to FIRE and the NCAC, the letter was signed by eleven other national organizations: the American Association of University Professors, the American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression, the American Civil Liberties Union, the American Library Association’s Office for Intellectual Freedom, the First Amendment Committee of the American Society of Journalists and Authors, the College Art Association, the Freedom to Read Foundation, the First Amendment Project, the First Amendment Lawyers Association, and the Middle East Studies Association.
Thousands of Students Return to Campus with New Tools to Defend Liberty

Thousands of members of FIRE’s Campus Freedom Network have returned to campus this fall armed with new resources to fight for liberty on campus. At too many American colleges and universities, illiberal speech codes allow students less free speech than they would have in a public park. FIRE is offering abundant resources for students who wish to fight for their rights, including a prize-based incentive program for liberty activists on campus and $15,000 in scholarships for high school students. FIRE’s new online activism tools include an Online Action Center where students, faculty, and the general public can contact administrators at schools where FIRE has an ongoing case and a Red Alert widget that individuals can post on their website to alert visitors to the campuses that most restrict free expression. Of course, FIRE will continue to offer its classic resources including FIRE’s Guides to Student Rights on Campus and Spotlight, FIRE’s extensive speech code ratings database.

$15,000 High School Essay Contest:

After the success of FIRE’s 2008 “Freedom in Academia” high school essay competition, FIRE is again inviting high school seniors (graduating in 2010) to submit essays on freedom of speech in higher education. Each competitor will watch two short documentaries about FIRE cases and then write an essay focusing on how the college administrators featured in the documentaries betrayed the purpose of a university as a “marketplace of ideas.” The author of the best essay will receive a $5,000 college scholarship, two second-place winners will each receive a $2,500 college scholarship, and five runners-up will each receive a $1,000 college scholarship. All winning essays will be featured on FIRE’s website. Essays must be submitted by November 6, 2009. Complete rules are available at thefire.org/contests.

Incentive Program:

Building on last year’s success, the CFN re-launched the incentive program, which rewards the students who work hardest to reform their campuses for liberty, for the 2009–2010 school year. Students earn points for recruiting new CFN members, publishing op-eds about free speech, and hosting FIRE speakers. These points can be redeemed for prizes including FIRE Nalgene water bottles, gift certificates, and books on liberty. Members who earn the most points throughout the 2009–2010 school year will also be inducted into the CFN’s Prometheus Society, and will compete for the grand prize of a generous technology bundle or a $2,500 college scholarship.

FIRE keeps adding to its growing pool of resources and programs to empower students to restore liberty on their own campuses. Every student and faculty member concerned about the state of liberty on campus should join the CFN and learn how they can defend their rights.
CFN Partners with Students for Liberty on Students Rights Week

During the first weeks of the fall semester, more than twenty chapters affiliated with Students for Liberty across the country passed out over 1,500 copies of FIRE’s Guide to Free Speech on Campus and over 500 copies of FIRE’s Guide to First-Year Orientation and Thought Reform on Campus at orientations and student-group fairs on their respective campuses. The effort was part of a coordinated “Students Rights Week” held on campuses throughout the nation. It was a great way to kick off the fall semester and inform new and returning students about their essential rights on campus.

Campus Freedom Network Launches New Website

Last month, the CFN launched a new website to better aid students in their efforts to reform campuses across the country. The website has important features including tips for writing effective op-eds, tips for holding a successful event, a registration form for hosting a FIRE speaker, and a blog tailored to the interests of college students and faculty. Additionally, the new site is packed with exciting new tools that should make our activism efforts more powerful.

The biggest improvement in the website is a social networking function that allows CFN members to more easily communicate with one another, whether they are across the country or across campus. Members have the ability to set up profiles, share photos and videos from their campaigns, and chat online with each other and FIRE staff. In addition, the new website has tools that allow students to invite friends to join the CFN through email or any of their favorite social networking sites, which makes spreading the word about free speech on campus even easier! Visit www.thecfn.org to see the new website.
Bucknell University Joins Worst Offenders Against Liberty on FIRE’s Red Alert List

Repeated letters from FIRE, backed up with documentary evidence, have clearly demonstrated to Bucknell that its suppression of the political activities of the Bucknell University Conservatives Club (BUCC) was a violation of its supposed core principles of free expression. However, Bucknell has continued to willfully misinterpret its policies and offer after-the-fact defenses that make a mockery of campus expression and severely endanger free speech at the university. Despite the fact that its actions have sparked widespread public condemnation and negative publicity, Bucknell has refused to accept wrongdoing for its suppression of the BUCC’s activities.

The controversy at Bucknell began in March, when BUCC members attempted to distribute fake dollar bills featuring an image of President Obama in protest of the federal stimulus package. BUCC members were told by a campus administrator that they were “busted,” and that their activities were in violation of Bucknell’s Sales and Solicitation policy. Even after the students pointed out that the “stimulus dollars” distribution was an obvious act of political protest and that the BUCC was not actually engaged in solicitation, Bucknell insisted that the students’ actions fell under the policy, claiming that it was the equivalent of “handing out Bibles” (which also would not constitute solicitation under the policy). Such a misinterpretation of this policy effectively subjects any distribution of materials between students to the prior review and approval of the Bucknell administration, which significantly undermines the school’s commitment to free expression.

FIRE wrote to Bucknell President Brian C. Mitchell, pointing out the numerous violations of its own policies—and of its legal and moral obligation to protect its students’ free speech rights—that Bucknell had committed in suppressing the BUCC’s activities. After receiving a response from Bucknell General Counsel Wayne Bromfield upholding the rationale for Bucknell’s deplorable treatment of the BUCC and refusing to accept fault, FIRE wrote to President Mitchell once more. Upon receiving another letter from Bromfield in which he refused to address FIRE’s concerns further, FIRE added Bucknell to its Red Alert list. President Mitchell has yet to offer any public comment on Bucknell’s free speech crisis, which has been chronicled in The Philadelphia Inquirer and The Wall Street Journal, among other publications.

Bucknell’s contemptuous treatment of the BUCC should send a message to all current and prospective Bucknell students that their free speech rights are at the whim of an administration that is all too willing to bend its own policies and strong-arm its students to stifle any speech that it does not want heard on campus. By placing Bucknell on its Red Alert list, FIRE hopes to amplify that message, and to finally compel Bucknell to end its embarrassing fight against free speech.

Bucknell shares the “honor” of a spot on the Red Alert list with Brandeis, Colorado College, Johns Hopkins, Michigan State, and Tufts.

Please visit FIRE’s Spotlight for comprehensive information on the state of liberty on America’s campuses, including pages for individual academic institutions, relevant links to our research of speech codes, and case materials from FIRE’s Individual Rights Defense Program.
FIRE’s Summer Internship
Program a Success

For ten weeks this summer, Jesse, Tim, Noah, John, Maureen, and Daniel joined the fight for liberty on campus in the Philadelphia FIRE office. Alexandra, FIRE’s Legal Intern, offered invaluable assistance in our New York office. But it wasn’t all work. The undergrads had the opportunity to attend the 2nd Annual CFN Summer Conference, where they heard from FIRE Co-founder Harvey Silverglate, author and professor KC Johnson, and lawyer and author Wendy Kaminer, among other free speech luminaries. Additionally, the interns were treated to private seminars with such academic stalwarts as FIRE Co-founder Alan Charles Kors, University of Wisconsin professor Don Downs, George Mason Law School professor and Volokh Conspiracy contributor Todd Zywicki, University of Massachusetts professor and FIRE Board member Daphne Patai, and New York Civil Rights Coalition founder and executive director Michael Meyers. Each session was an enlightening experience. Our undergraduate interns arrived on their campuses this fall with a deeper understanding of their rights. Several of the interns hit the ground running, publishing op-eds and articles in the campus and the national press about free speech on their campuses.

In New York, Alexandra—who entered her second year at Columbia University School of Law this fall—spent her summer working closely with Will and Greg on a wide variety of legal research and writing. Specifically, Alex researched variances in public forum analysis in federal circuit caselaw concerning “non-community” speakers on campus, prepared a memo on the constitutionality of Michigan State University’s new spam policy, studied the impact of contract disclaimer clauses on university handbooks in state and federal jurisprudence, assisted in the composition of responses to universities, and provided excellent spot research as needed to all FIRE lawyers throughout the summer.

The undergraduate interns spent the summer helping FIRE staff prepare for the 10th Anniversary Celebration in October, updating old FIRE databases and creating new ones, preparing internal reports on trends in public opinion on the First Amendment, debating the finer points of campus liberty with FIRE staff and one another, and blogging about various FIRE issues. Noah and Tim weighed in on The Torch regarding their findings on high school students’ opinions on the First Amendment. Noah also penned an insightful post for the Columbia Spectator’s Commentariat blog on Columbia’s speech codes. John wrote a scathing rebuke of Cornell University for its student-led censorship, and Daniel recounted the myriad problems plaguing his beloved Brandeis University. All in all, not bad.

Left to Right: Tim Nuccio, Daniel Ortner, Jesse Naiman, Noah Baron, Maureen Slack, John Cetta

Want more FIRE news and views? Check out The Torch, FIRE’s blog, for daily updates at www.thefire.org/torch.
One of the most important tools in the fight for free speech on campus is Spotlight, FIRE's database of restrictions on speech at hundreds of colleges and universities nationwide. Each school in Spotlight is updated annually with detailed information about the institution’s most current policies, and schools are rated as “Red Light,” “Yellow Light,” or “Green Light” depending on how much speech their policies restrict (“red light” institutions having the most severe restrictions on free speech, and so forth). It is our hope that in the same way students and parents check the U.S. News & World Report rankings every year to see how particular schools stack up academically, they will check Spotlight every year to see how those same schools stack up in terms of protecting students’ rights. Because a good academic program doesn’t mean much if a student’s progress can be completely derailed simply for speaking his or her mind.

Each year, FIRE also issues a report about the state of free speech on campus nationwide. Last year’s report found that an overwhelming percentage of schools—74 percent—maintained policies that clearly restrict speech that would otherwise be protected by the First Amendment. Worse yet, the incidence of unconstitutional speech codes was significantly higher at public universities (77%) than at private universities (67%), which is striking in light of the fact that public universities, as government entities, are obligated to uphold the guarantees of the First Amendment. Last year’s report also discussed several trends in campus censorship, such as the burgeoning number of “bias reporting” policies encouraging students to turn one another in for protected speech.

Preparations for this year’s report, due out in December, are already well underway. Between September 2008 and September 2009, we reviewed and analyzed policies at over 370 universities to gather data for this year’s report. In addition to examining that data, this year’s report will discuss several trends that emerged over the course of the year: the disturbing increase in the number of universities that are restricting access to their speech-related policies by requiring a login and password, thus preventing prospective students and their parents from accessing important information; the impermissible use of security fees to “price out” controversial expression on campus; and the increasing use of internet-usage policies to punish online expression. The report will also review legal developments in the fight for free speech on campus, including the newest decision in the unbroken line of cases holding that college and university speech codes are unconstitutional.

Over the years, FIRE has helped many students who were facing disciplinary action for nothing more than expressing themselves. This remains a core part of our mission. But another crucial aspect of our mission is to prevent these situations from ever arising in the first place by helping students and their families be informed about and stand up for their rights before any punishment is ever inflicted. By consulting FIRE’s Spotlight database and reading our annual report about free speech on campus, students can arrive on campus with a thorough understanding of their rights and how those rights are threatened at specific institutions.

Samantha K. Harris, a Philadelphia native, graduated from the University of Pennsylvania Law School and from Princeton University, where she earned an A.B. magna cum laude in politics. As an undergraduate, Samantha completed a senior thesis that analyzed the constitutional implications of former Mayor Rudolph Giuliani’s quality-of-life initiative in New York City. During law school, she served on the editorial board of the Journal of Constitutional Law. Before joining FIRE, Samantha clerked for the late Honorable Jay C. Waldman of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, and most recently was an associate at the law firm of Pepper Hamilton in Philadelphia.
The FIRE Quarterly is published four times per year by the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education.

The mission of FIRE is to defend and sustain individual rights at America’s increasingly repressive and partisan colleges and universities. These rights include freedom of speech, legal equality, due process, religious liberty, and sanctity of conscience—the essential qualities of individual liberty and dignity. FIRE’s core mission is to protect the unprotected and to educate the public and communities of concerned Americans about the threats to these rights on our campuses and about the means to preserve them.

FIRE is a charitable and educational tax-exempt foundation within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions to FIRE are deductible to the fullest extent provided by tax laws.

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Do you love reading about all of FIRE’s accomplishments and the victories we have won for campus liberty in the Quarterly? It’s because of the generous and undying support of our donors that these successes are possible. Help us continue to fill our newsletter with happy endings by enrolling in FIRE’s monthly giving program today.

Enrolling in the program saves you time and money: no more having to write and mail in checks or pay for stamps, and no more worrying that your gift might be lost in the mail. With a monthly donation, protecting liberty on campus is easier than ever. FIRE will automatically charge your credit card each month for the amount you specify, and if your credit card expires, we’ll send you a reminder to renew! To sign up, you can write the word “MONTHLY” on the enclosed return envelope, visit the donate page on our website (www.thefire.org), or give us a call at 215-717-3473.

Monthly gifts are easy, fast, and convenient for you and for FIRE. You’ll know exactly how much is coming out of your account on the same day of each month, and we’ll be able to devote less staff time and fewer resources to collecting and processing your donations. That means we can devote even more of our resources to what we all truly care about: protecting free speech, freedom of conscience, due process and other essential rights on campus.

As you well know, free speech doesn’t always come for free—but with your commitment to a monthly gift that we can count on, you can ensure that FIRE’s fight to restore freedom to campuses across the nation never falters. And, if you enroll in FIRE’s monthly giving program before the end of 2009 (or upgrade the monthly gift you’re already making), we’ll send you your choice of a FIRE t-shirt, a FIRE mug, or a copy of The Shadow University! Just let us know which one you would like when you sign up.

For more information, feel free to give us a call at 215-717-3473 or e-mail us at support@thefire.org.
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The Last Word:

Dave Barry, Award-Winning Humorist, Speaks Out on College Censorship in New FIRE Video

Dave Barry, Pulitzer Prize-winning humor columnist and author of more than 30 books, is no stranger to critics trying to censor his writing. The nationally syndicated humorist has written some of our nation’s funniest columns—and with the First Amendment on his side, he’s been winning the battle for free speech for over 25 years. FIRE has released a video that features Barry discussing why freedom of expression is important to him and how today’s politically correct college campuses are creating a culture of censorship that stifles humor writing and the opinions of millions of students across the country. View the video at www.youtube.com/user/TheFIREorg