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## Students Frown on UA Faculty's Free-Speech Shutdown Attempt

By Jim Brown  
March 3, 2005

(AgapePress) - University of Alabama students are reacting to a perceived attack on their First Amendment rights.

Last fall the Faculty Senate at the University of Alabama passed a resolution banning school-sponsored speech that could be considered homophobic, sexist, or racist. In response, the Student Senate passed a free-speech resolution that directly counters the so-called "hate speech" resolution.

David French, president of the [Foundation for Individual Rights in Education](#) (FIRE), describes the students' move as brilliant. He says he had sent an open letter to the UA community, protesting the faculty's policy.

The problem with the school's resolution, French says, is that "what language is or is not homophobic often depends a lot on the ear of the listener," especially in the absence of any standard definition of the term. "Again and again, courts have said you just simply cannot ban speech on that basis," he notes, "so the University Faculty Senate was essentially asking the university to implement a speech code."

The head of FIRE says UA has a troubling history of curbing free expression on its campus, with past administrators having taken censorious actions "from banning displays of the American flag to refusing to recognize a dissenting faculty group -- one that wasn't falling in line with the leftist mainstream of the university." The Alabama school has shown repeatedly "that it does not have terribly high regard for free speech," he adds, "and it was incredibly distressing to see the faculty mirror that lack of regard for free speech and try to get the university to pass a speech code."

But now that the Student Senate members have voiced their displeasure, French says University of Alabama president Robert Witt must choose between a course of "censorship" through the hate speech resolution or "freedom" through the free speech resolution. The students' counter measure has been sent to the office of the university president for approval.

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Jim Brown, a regular contributor to *AgapePress*, is a reporter for [American Family Radio News](#), which can be heard online.

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