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Campus Left to Christians, Conservatives: Shut Up!

By Mark Tapscott

Dec 24, 2005

Scratch many of the administrators in charge on American campuses these days and you often find a neo-Stalinist who has no hesitation about suppressing views that deviate from leftist orthodoxy.

If you doubt me, try supporting Christianity or conservatism in a public way in the ivy covered groves of American academe. Take California State University at San Bernadino, for example, where administrators refuse to charter the Christian Students Association because the group thinks its members should be professing Christians. Imagine that!

The group “would not be required to admit members who did not support the purpose of the organization (beliefs),” but, said [CSUSB’s Christine Hansen](#), CSA could not exclude students “because of their status as a non-Christian or as a homosexual.” Hansen is Director of the school’s Office of Student Leadership and Development.

Without the charter, CSA can’t receive financial assistance, distribute flyers and other materials on campus or hold meetings on school property. The [Foundation for Individual Rights in Education is challenging CSUSB](#) on behalf of the student group.

George Orwell would instantly recognize Hansen and her double-speak as an extreme left-wing campus bureaucrat using intentionally ambiguous but politically correct language to bully dissenters into submission.

Sadly, CSUSB is not unique, either in California or elsewhere. Hansen says she is merely enforcing a rule that covers all 23 campuses in the California State University system. One might think she would put enforcement on hold while the constitutionality of the rule is tried in court, as a result of a [suit](#) filed by the Alliance Defense Fund.

“The right of association applies to all groups on campus,” said Jeremy Tedesco, litigation staff counsel for the Alliance Defense Fund. “All student groups have a right to elect officers and members who share that group’s values or belief system. These universities are requiring Christian organizations to accept members who disagree with their beliefs and viewpoints, violating these students’ First Amendment rights.”

Other schools with similar rules that are or have recently been challenged by FIRE include Tufts University, Rutgers University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Purdue University, Ohio State University, Louisiana State University and the Milwaukee School of Engineering.

As for conservatives on campus, look at what is happening at DePaul University where Ward Churchill, the University of Colorado professor who viciously described the 9/11 victims as “Little Eichmans,” was

scheduled to speak in October.

The DePaul College Republicans decided to protest the use of tax dollars to pay Churchill to teach a student seminar at DePaul, beginning with distribution on campus of [flyers](#) quoting some of Churchill's statements. According to DePaul's Ashli Grabau, the flyers – made up almost entirely of direct quotes from Churchill – were “propaganda” and could not be distributed on campus. Grabau is Assistant Director of DePaul's Office of Student Life.

Puzzled that Churchill's own words would be construed as anti-Churchill propaganda, the CRs went ahead with the flyers. That resulted in a formal [warning](#) from Grabau to cease and desist. The penalty for failing to comply was withholding of financial assistance and other “student organization privileges,” Grabau said. FIRE is now challenging DePaul on behalf of the CRs.

“Just as DePaul was free to invite Ward Churchill to speak, so should its students be free to object to that invitation,” said FIRE Director of Legal and Public Advocacy Greg Lukianoff. “DePaul's president boasts of the university's commitment to academic freedom and free speech, but actions speak louder than words.”

Regular readers of this column know how I value the First Amendment and its guarantee of freedom of religion, speech, assembly and petition to every American. It is a sad fact that too many colleges and universities now use speech codes, non-discrimination requirements, “free speech” zones, mandatory diversity training and discriminatory distribution of mandatory student fees to suppress expression of conservative political and religious values.

Those who seek to suppress First Amendment liberties are also trying to manipulate what can be thought. After all, what we say expresses what we think and what we think defines us as individuals and as groups. That is why attacks on freedom of speech are ultimately attacks on the very existence of dissenting individuals and groups.

As ADF's Tedesco points out, “university officials would never require that the student vegetarian club allow meat eaters or hunters to lead their organization. The ultimate impact of this policy will be to either eliminate Christian clubs from campus or dilute them to the point where they are no longer Christian.”

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