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Thursday 30 October, 2003    Home > News > NEPA News > State News

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## State News

# Philadelphia group wants to fight PC talk with FIRE

The Associated Press

October 29, 2003

## A free speech watchdog group warned lawmakers Wednesday that efforts to be more "politically correct" on college campuses have led to restrictions on intellectual discourse.

Efforts such as diversity curriculums and sensitivity policies have led students and faculty "to fight for the right to express opinions that citizens outside of academia would simply take for granted," said Greg Lukianoff, the legal director of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education.

Lukianoff said that of 176 colleges surveyed by Philadelphia-based FIRE, 76 restrict speech that would otherwise be protected off campus, including:

\_Hampshire College in Massachusetts, which bans "psychological intimidation and harassment of any person or pet;"

\_The University of California-Santa Cruz, which warns against speech that disrespects, among other things, political views; and

\_Hood College in Maryland, which defines harassment as "any intentionally disrespectful behavior towards others."

"While disrespectful behavior may be rude, it certainly does not rise to the level of the crime of harassment," Lukianoff testified in front of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions.

The president of Washington-based American Association for Higher Education, however, dismissed the charge.

"This concern that students are being hurt or deprived of freedom of speech is bogus," said AAHE President Clara Lovett. "If there are students who feel that one particular campus may be espousing ideas that students don't agree with, they can easily go somewhere else. We have campuses that have a tradition of liberal politics and 'politically correct' views; we also have Bob Jones University, and everything in between."

Bob Jones University is a private Christian fundamentalist college in Columbia, S.C., that until recently banned interracial dating and questions Catholicism on its Internet site.

While a legislative remedy for free speech concerns appears unlikely, lawmakers said, Sen. Judd Gregg, R-N.H., questioned whether college faculty who describe themselves as politically liberal are biasing their students by barring "alternative viewpoints" in the classroom.



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"How can students be liberally educated if they are only receiving part of the story?" said Gregg, who chaired the committee. "What do we teach students about freedom when they see that some views are discouraged or even forbidden?"

Lovett, however, cited polls indicating that more undergraduate students than ever consider themselves politically conservative.

Back to top 



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