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SECTIONS:

[Front Page](#)

[Today's News](#)

[Information Technology](#)

[Teaching](#)

[Publishing](#)

[Money](#)

[Government & Politics](#)

[Community Colleges](#)

[Science](#)

[Students](#)

[Athletics](#)

[International](#)

[People](#)

[Events](#)

[The Chronicle Review](#)

[Jobs](#)

FEATURES:

[Colloquy](#)

[Colloquy Live](#)

[Magazines & Journals](#)

[New Grant Competitions](#)

[Facts & Figures](#)

[Issues in Depth](#)

[Site Sampler](#)

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[This Week's Issue](#)

[Back Issues](#)

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## Advocates Tell Senate Panel of Broad Threats to Free Speech on Campuses

By [ERIC HOOVER](#)

Washington

Concern about campus speech codes resounded on Wednesday on Capitol Hill as panelists, testifying at a U.S. Senate committee hearing on "intellectual diversity" at colleges, argued that overbroad conduct policies are stifling the free-speech rights of students and professors throughout the nation.

While members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions said the issue did not warrant federal legislation, the hearing was further evidence that the debate over free expression in higher education is reverberating outside academe.

In an opening statement, Sen. Judd Gregg, a New Hampshire Republican and the committee's chairman, said that speech codes have chilled debate in higher education.

"What do we teach students about freedom when they see that some views are discouraged or even forbidden?" Mr. Gregg said. "What does free speech stand for if it's not allowed on campus?"

Anne D. Neal, president of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, described a broad threat to the free exchange of ideas at colleges, citing the disinclination of politically incorrect speakers, politicized instruction by faculty members, and one-sided teach-ins as examples.

The solutions rest not with legislators, but with college administrators and trustees, she said. Ms. Neal proposed that university trustees adopt a statement calling for faculty members to present a balanced view of contentious issues, insisting that their institutions offer broad-based survey courses, and ensuring that speaker programs present a range of opinions, among other recommendations.

Greg Lukianoff, director of legal and public advocacy for the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, a

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free-speech watchdog group, described an array of speech codes, including e-mail policies banning "derogatory comments," the rise of "free-speech zones" that restrict demonstrations to specific parts of campuses, and harassment policies that forbid "intolerant expression."

Mr. Lukiannoff also cited five dozen documented instances in which students have stolen or destroyed copies of campus newspapers over the last decade, apparently to silence unpopular views.

"Students educated in this environment can hardly be blamed if they come to view speech as little more than a tool that one must do their best to deny their enemies, rather than as a sacred value," Mr. Lukianoff said.

Another speaker, Anthony Dick, a junior at the University of Virginia, argued that university policies, such as UVa's nondiscrimination guidelines, unfairly "politicize" campuses. This semester, Mr. Dick, who described himself as a liberal, co-founded the Individual Rights Coalition, a nonpartisan group that has lobbied against a proposed mandatory diversity-training program on the campus.

"For higher education to maintain its integrity, it must be treated and viewed not as a means to any political end, but as an invaluable end in and of itself," Mr. Dick said.

Senator Gregg said the committee would probably hold more hearings on the issue.

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Background articles from *The Chronicle*:

- [Letter to Colleges From Education Department Says Anti-Harassment Rules Should Respect Free Speech](#) (8/13/2003)
- [War of Words](#) (5/23/2003)
- [Free-Speech Group Publishes Guides to Student Rights](#) (3/21/2003)
- [Promoting Order or Squelching Campus Dissent?](#) (1/12/2001)

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- [Speech Codes: Alive and Well at Colleges ...](#)  
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