



FIRE Chalks Up Another Victory for Students' Free-Speech Rights

By Jim Brown
May 16, 2005

(AgapePress) - The [State University of New York at Brockport](#) has agreed to repeal its speech code. It is the fourth consecutive victory for a Philadelphia-based group it is campaign against such codes on America's public college and university campuses.

Last June, with help from the [Foundation for Individual Rights in Education](#) (FIRE), two students in the College Republican Club filed a federal lawsuit alleging that SUNY Brockport's anti-harassment policies violated their free-speech rights. Under Brockport's speech code, examples of harassment included "cartoons that depict religious figures in compromising situations," calling someone an "old bag," and "jokes ... making fun of any protected group."

Brockport has now reached a settlement with FIRE legal network attorneys. Greg Lukianoff, FIRE's director of legal and public advocacy, says the school is no longer trampling the First Amendment. The school, he says, demonstrated "good judgment" in dealing with the issue.

"They decided to try to rectify their policies," he states. "I mean, it wasn't a very close call to begin with -- like way too many schools, SUNY-Brockport's policies were clearly unconstitutional."

Lukianoff says while Brockport's decision to end censorship of student expression is a welcome move, it is one that will be monitored to ensure the university follows through with its commitment.

"Just because you've eliminated rules that are formally, on their face, unfavorable to speech doesn't mean that censorship is definitely over," Lukianoff explains. "Some of the worst cases that FIRE sees actually involve situations where students are punished not under unconstitutional speech codes, but under existing rules just wrongly applied."

While SUNY Brockport would not admit wrongdoing in the settlement, it has agreed to remove the aforementioned examples of sexual harassment from its policies. FIRE has also defeated speech codes at Texas Tech University, Shippensburg University (in Pennsylvania), and California's Citrus College.

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

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