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March 22, 2017

Father John P. Fitzgibbons, S.J.  
Office of the President  
Regis University  
3333 Regis Boulevard B-4  
Denver, Colorado 80221-1099

Sent via U.S. Mail and Electronic Mail ([president@regis.edu](mailto:president@regis.edu))

Dear President Fitzgibbons:

The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to defending liberty, freedom of speech, due process, academic freedom, legal equality, and freedom of conscience on America's college campuses.

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Within the traditions of its mission and Catholic, Jesuit heritage, Regis University expects its students to develop a high standard of behavior and personal values. Among the expectations are included:

[ . . . ]

- Respect for the University's academic traditions of honesty, freedom of expression and open inquiry;

Additionally, Regis' Student Handbook states that "the Regis community seeks to live the Jesuit mission by . . . providing opportunities for self-expression and growth in the Regis community" and that "[i]ntentionally and substantially interfering with the freedom of expression of others in or on University Property or at University sponsored activities" constitutes prohibited conduct.

McSheehy's claim that Beck's tabling event constituted a demonstration because it was meant to dissent from the messages of Social Justice Week and therefore requires special permission is at odds with Regis' stated commitments to freedom of expression. To uphold the promises that it made to its students, Regis must reaffirm to Beck and the campus community that Regis will not arbitrarily silence student speech.

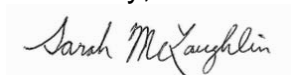
Beck's speech may have been considered controversial by some members of the campus community. However, as provided by Beck to FIRE, a group of students debated the table's merits with Beck, nevertheless entitled to the same protection as uncontroversial expression. The principle of freedom of speech does not exist to protect only controversial expression; it exists precisely

considerations. Many students feel compelled to make their voices heard specifically because they encounter speech they believe deserves a response, or a protest. Even students who wish to host a tabling event in support of Regis' Social Justice Week are arguably protesting injustice. Surely Regis would not claim that those students could not continue their event as well, even if they only gained approval from Regis' Student Services. While Regis may place certain limits on protests—that is, large assemblies of people gathered to collectively express a view—it cannot characterize any dissent as a demonstration and thereby burden it with the requirements imposed on marches and large assemblies.

If administrators can stymie students' free speech rights by simply labeling their expression as protests or demonstrations, then student speech at Regis is no longer free. To honor its numerous stated commitments to free expression, Regis University must assure students that their speech will not be limited simply because it could be interpreted as a demonstration.

FIRE is committed to using all of the resources at our disposal to see this matter through to a just conclusion. We request a response to this letter by April 5, 2017.

Sincerely,



Sarah McLaughlin  
Program Officer, Individual Rights Defense Program

cc:

Diane McSheehy, Dean of Students!