

January 7, 2009

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Samantha K. Harris
Director, Speech Code Research
Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE)
601 Walnut St., Suite 510
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Dear Ms. Harris:

This is in response to your letter of December 22, 2008.

Your baseless claim that this University fails to uphold the First Amendment rights of students is false.

Here are the facts.

Your letter refers to the "Protect Policy" in our *Protect Policy on Student Demonstrations* ("PPD"). This policy is located in the Student Handbook, located south of Anthony Hall. This designation exists to accommodate groups and individuals who wish to use amplified sound. As I am sure you would agree, in addition to protecting and encouraging free speech, the changes of needs, we also have an obligation to ensure that a safe and peaceful environment exists for all members of the campus.

I would draw your attention to the paragraph titled "Protect Policy" in the PPD Handbook. The Handbook refers the reader to our full policy on demonstrations, which is available at <http://www.siu.edu/~policies/policies/demonstr.html>. I would encourage you to read the full policy.

The policy begins by quoting, in part, policies of our University's governing body, the SIU Board of Trustees: "The university is a community dedicated to intellectual development by the process of rational thought and to the free expression of ideas and opinions. It is a community that has always been essential to the progress of our society and the well-being of our time. Southern Illinois University has historically stood in this tradition."

The policy continues: "The university is committed to the free expression of ideas and opinions and to the maintenance of the open university community. Freedom to speak by lawful means must and will be protected by all the authority available to the university."

The policy sets out standards of respect and civility for diversity that are designed to respect the rights of all members of the campus community. It also notes that the two designated areas for amplified sound are the aforementioned "Open Forum Area" and another location near Morris Library. The policy states that these areas are the only areas where even the presence of a large group would not interfere with the rights of others to go about their business unimpeded.

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By engaging in a thorough examination of our policies, you would be aware of a section called "Events Outside of Designated Public Forum Areas." It reads as follows: "Individuals, organizations, and groups of persons seeking to engage in noncommercial free expression on property owned and/or controlled by the University may do so in accordance with the Standards of Respect and Civility in the University Learning Community, as noted above." That does not qualify as ignoring constitutional guarantees of freedom of

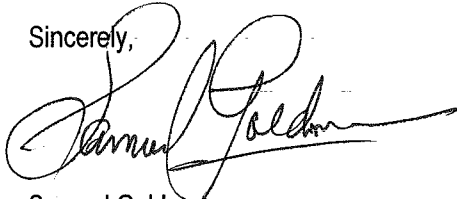
A recent example clearly illustrates that this university does not "restrict and curtail free expression," as your letter erroneously suggests. In October, the Center for Bio-Ethical Reform erected a very graphic anti-abortion display that many letter writers to our student newspaper decried as, among other things, "repulsive" and "inappropriate." This display included images of aborted fetuses and graphic photos and compared abortionists to Nazi "death camp doctors."

It is essential that you realize that this overarching free speech event that you have been did not take place in the "free/open forum areas." In fact, it was located in one of the busiest areas of campus for pedestrian traffic.

There is no prohibition on our campus that prevents anyone from handing out leaflets or pamphlets. We rightly expect demonstrators, wherever they may be on campus, not to leave an area littered with trash, debris or personal property. We also do not impose "onerous" pre-registration regulations, monetary deposits or insurance requirements on members of the campus community.

SUIC is indeed an institution committed to intellectual rigor, robust debate, and a free and vibrant community.

Sincerely,



Samuel Goldman
Chancellor

c: Greg Lukianoff, President, FIRE