

Dear MSFS members:

I write to express my support in your efforts. I labored as a professor at a private college for five years. The chill upon freedom of expression for me was palpable there. Fortunately I am now situated at a public college.

The letter you received and posted from the student objecting to your initiatives was appalling. If I understood correctly, this student felt "assailed" and considers it a "crime" to have her opinion solicited from within the college community by fellow students, and fears retribution in the form of her opinion not being "valued." Apart from the transparent dramatizing, this kind of timidity or cowardice, which I gather from the student's own words, is precisely the kind of thing that those who would suppress freedom of speech have always thrived upon and sought to nurture.

Weakness is no virtue. Courage and a willingness to oppose power exercised without principle are necessary ingredients to preserve freedom, as history shows. If this student doesn't have the courage to withstand mere disapproval from fellow students, I wonder when they plan on getting any. After they graduate into the work force, and their boss tells them to falsify figures in a ledger, or lie for the company under oath perhaps? Or maybe when a local neighborhood hate group burns down a local synagogue or mosque, or throws rocks through the window? The sheer exaggeration and hysterical hyperbole of that letter, and the inversion of logical reasoning it reflected, was staggering, bordering on sickening. If that letter expressed a sentiment common among students on your campus, I can understand why your group formed, and how formidable the challenges you face. It is inspiring to see young people like yourselves willing to take a stand for freedom. I encourage you to stay the course.

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PS. I recently wrote a letter to the President of Western Michigan University, my alma mater, in response to a feature FIRE posted in their "Speech Code of the Month" section. I am happy to say the letter apparently proved quite effective. The outcome was posted in FIRE's "The Torch." Again, keep up the good fight.