

Students Outraged After University Moves 9/11 Memorial

For the past two years, the Young Americans for Freedom chapter at Southern Methodist University displayed nearly 3,000 American flags on a prominent university lawn to remember those killed in the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

But Old Glory won't be posted on the Dallas Hall Lawn this year—even though the display had been well-received by the student body.

The university objected to the location of the display, citing a revised policy aimed at protecting students from “harmful or triggering” messages.

“While the university respects the rights of students to free speech, the university respects the right of members of the community to avoid messages that are triggering, harmful or harassing,” the policy reads.

I reached out to Southern Methodist University to find out who could possibly take offense at a memorial honoring American citizens killed by Muslim terrorists. I had my suspicions, but I wanted to hear it from the university's leadership.

Spokesman Kent Best told me the revised policy covers all lawn displays, not just the 9/11 memorial.

He explained that a portion of the lawn is used for outdoor class space and studying and all sorts of collegiate activities—activities that would have to be moved if the flags were displayed.

Instead, the flag display is being moved to a far-less

prominent and less-trafficked part of the university's campus.

"SMU respects the rights of all campus community members to express their opinions, as well as their right to be free from coercion and harassment," Best told me.

Now, what is that supposed to mean?

Does the university fear that some students or faculty members might be coerced or harassed by a poignant reminder of the atrocities committed by Muslim terrorists on American soil?

To be fair, SMU said they have since updated their policy again—"to remove the poor wording regarding triggering or harmful messages."

That's all well and good—but the university clearly has concerns about coercion and harassment.

Grant Wolf, the leader of SMU's Young Americans for Freedom chapter, told me he was disappointed in the university's decision and considers it to be an assault on free speech.

"The university's statement is reflective of a larger problematic attitude present on college campuses nationwide that the presentation of words and ideas constitute a kind of violence or 'macroaggression,'" he told "The Todd Starnes Show."

"When we see our school use rhetoric of that ilk to defend a policy whose effect is the mitigation of debate and dialogue on campus, we students who love freedom have legitimate cause for concern," he added.

Now, there's a bit of a backstory to this issue—involving the university's pro-life group and left-leaning students.

Last year, Mustangs for Life filled the lawn with thousands of crosses to symbolize children lost to abortion. The outrage from pro-abortion activists was overwhelming.

And that is what Wolf suspects is really behind the university's decision to scuttle future memorial displays to a less prominent section of campus.

"The fact that this display caused such controversy, combined with the university's stated rationale claiming a right to be free from offense, provides circumstantial evidence that the university instituted this policy to prevent possible public outcry from students offended by or opposed to ideas presented in displays," Wolf told "The Todd Starnes Show."

Southern Methodist University seems to function under the mistaken notion that young people and faculty members have a constitutional right not to be offended.

And yet, the university seems to believe that free speech must be muted for the sake of not hurting a collegiate snowflake's feelings.

And since Southern Methodist University refused to listen to the reasonable request from the Young Americans for Freedom, perhaps they will listen to the deep pockets of their donors and alums. {eoa}