

UCLA Eliminates Code Hindering Free Speech

In a victory for culture wars on campus, the University of California, Los Angeles, has revised a problematic flier-posting policy.

The policy vaguely prohibited a broad array of speech protected by the **First Amendment**.

“Universities are supposed to be a marketplace of ideas, not censorship. We commend UCLA for acting promptly to respect the **free speech** rights of its students,” says Heather Gebelin Hacker, Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) legal counsel. “A policy like UCLA’s was clearly unconstitutional and could have been used to silence the expression of those who hold to certain religious and political views.”

UCLA’s Center for Student Programming had a flier posting policy requiring posted materials “not be presented in any manner which tends to promote demeaning social stereotypes based on race, ethnicity, culture, gender or sexual orientation.”

After ADF attorneys brought the broadness and vagueness of the policy to the university’s attention, the policy was immediately revised to eliminate the problematic language.

The ADF letter, sent in April, explained that courts around the country have struck down policies with similar language.

“As the Supreme Court reiterated, ‘much political and **religious speech** might be perceived as offensive to some,’ but it is still protected speech,” the letter states. Moreover, “a university policy is unconstitutionally vague when ‘men of common intelligence must necessarily guess at its meaning.’”

"A public university should invite robust debate and dialogue on every conceivable issue, be open to the widest possible array of ideas and views and adopt policies that encourage the fullest possible exercise of First Amendment freedoms," the letter concludes.

ADF sent the letter to UCLA as part of its nationwide effort to change unconstitutional policies at public universities. UCLA joins Virginia Tech and several other universities that have made changes in response to ADF letters.