



SPEECH FIRST

University of Texas: Settlement Summary

Thanks to Speech First's lawsuit and subsequent settlement agreement filed on December 22, the University of Texas agreed to the following terms set by Speech First:

- 1) The school has removed the provision in its internet policy that prohibited sending "rude or harassing correspondence," and will not reinstate it.
- 2) The school has revised the provisions in its Residence Hall Manual governing harassment and incivility, and will not reinstate them.
- 3) The school amended its definition of verbal harassment, and will not reinstate the prior definition.
- 4) The school has abolished its Campus Climate Reporting Team; if the University ever creates an alternative to the CCRT, Speech First is free to challenge that alternative in a new lawsuit.

This landmark victory for free expression means the University of Texas can no longer intentionally chill student speech while ignoring the guaranteed protections of the First Amendment.

In her October 28th decision, Judge Edith Jones wrote that "the CCRT ... represents the clenched fist in the velvet glove of student speech regulation" – echoing the 6th Circuit's 2019 condemnation of Bias Response Teams.

"We are delighted that students at the University of Texas will be able to fully exercise their First Amendment rights without credibly fearing disciplinary action from their administration," said president Nicole Neily. "Public universities that maintain policies that have both the purpose and the effect of chilling student speech will be held accountable – and furthermore, this decision clearly shows that the days of mooting lawsuits simply by changing university policies during the course of litigation are over."