



# SPEECH FIRST

## Speech First Wins Lawsuit Against the University of Central Florida for Chilling Speech and Violating the First Amendment

**Washington D.C.** – Yesterday evening, Speech First, a non-profit member organization committed to protecting freedom of speech on college campuses, won their lawsuit - [Speech First v. Cartwright, et al.](#) — against the University of Central Florida (UCF) after challenging three of its policies that suppress and punish student speech on campus.

Speech First launched the lawsuit against UCF on February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021 challenging the following UCF policies:

- Discriminatory harassment policy
- Computer use policy
- Just Knights Response Team (JKRT)

Through the use of these policies, the UCF and its administrators created a series of rules and regulations that restrain, deter, suppress, and punish speech about the political and social issues of the day. Read more about this case [here](#).

Speech First was granted partial relief on July 29, 2021 regarding the computer use policy where the University has a ban on sending messages that are “intimidation, harassment, [or] unwarranted annoyance,” and agreed that the computer policy uses “broad and undefined terms”. The district court upheld, however, the University's bias-response team and its policy on "discriminatory harassment" and noted that Speech First had created a circuit split on bias-response teams, but it sided with the minority view of the Seventh Circuit rather than the majority view of the Fifth and Sixth Circuits. Speech First appealed these aspects of the district court's decision to the Eleventh Circuit on September 8th, 2021.

**The United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit sided with Speech First yesterday evening, in a 3-0 decision, you can find the decision [here](#).**

Judge Newsom wrote in the opinion, “Colleges and universities serve as the founts of—and the testing grounds for—new ideas. Their chief mission is to equip students to examine arguments critically and, perhaps even more importantly, to prepare young citizens to participate in the civic and political life of our democratic republic.”

Judge Marcus wrote in his concurring opinion, “History provides us with ample warning of those times and places when colleges and universities have stopped pursuing truth and have instead turned themselves into cathedrals for the worship of certain dogma. By depriving itself of academic institutions that pursue truth over any other concern, a society risks falling into the abyss of ignorance...” A university that turns itself into an asylum from controversy has ceased to be a university; it has just become an asylum.”

Cherise Trump, Executive Director of Speech First, said the following in response:

“This is a huge victory for every student at the University of Central Florida, as well as all students attending schools in Florida, Georgia, and Alabama. We are thrilled that the Court sided with us as we work to protect students’ First Amendment rights. This court decision should send an alarming message to anyone attempting to chill, silence, or bully into submission others’ opinions. Open dialogue and an exchange of ideas are how leaders are formed, censoring students will only stunt their ability to grow intellectually and contribute to society.”

-Speech First-