



Foundation for Individual Rights in Education

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February 24, 2010

President John C. Hitt
University of Central Florida
Office of the President
Millican Hall
Orlando, Florida 32816

URGENT

Sent via U.S. Mail and Facsimile (407-823-2264)

Dear President Hitt:

As you know from our previous letters to you on November 1, 2006, and January 24, 2007, and as you can see from the list of our Directors and Board of Advisors, the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE; thefire.org) unites leaders in the fields of civil rights and civil liberties, scholars, journalists, and public intellectuals across the political and ideological spectrum on behalf of liberty, legal equality, due process, academic freedom, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press on America's college campuses.

The University of Central Florida (UCF) appears to have revised its "free speech zone" policy as of January 15, 2010. We presume that the January 15, 2010, version of the policy (UCF-4.0293, "Use of University Facilities; Campus Demonstrations and Other Outdoor Events," available at http://regulations.ucf.edu/~regs/pdf/notices/4.0293UseofUnivFac_CampusDemonstrationsandOtherOutdoorAct.pdf) is the working policy at UCF. We write today on the basis of personal and published reports from UCF student journalists who write for KnightNews.com. They report that students working for KnightNews.com have been threatened by UCF officials with interference and possible arrest if they leave a designated free speech zone in order to videotape or report on a Student Government Association election today at around 5:00 p.m. KnightNews.com also has reported that its student reporters are uniquely being corralled within the designated zone, while the *Central Florida Future*, another independent student newspaper at UCF, is not similarly restricted.

If these reports are correct, UCF is violating the First Amendment right to freedom of the press and is discriminating against one media source in particular. UCF, a public institution bound by the U.S. Constitution, must refrain from interfering with the First Amendment rights of its students.

KnightNews.com has provided details about this case at <http://knightnews.com/2010/02/we-will-fight-for-free-speech-and-for-you/> and <http://knightnews.com/2010/02/first-amendment-breached-by-student-union/>. Please inform us if any of the facts in these accounts are incorrect.

Due to the urgency of this matter, we request that you respond immediately by refraining from taking unconstitutional action against KnightNews.com today or in the future. Please also respond to FIRE in writing by March 10, 2010.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adam Kissel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Adam" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Kissel".

Adam Kissel
Director, Individual Rights Defense Program

cc:

W. Scott Cole, Vice President and General Counsel, UCF
Patricia A. MacKown, Director, Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities, UCF
Richard Beary, Chief of Police, UCF
Brian Peterson, President, Student Government Association, UCF
Andrick Lewis, Vice President, Student Government Association, UCF
Vikki Shirley, General Counsel, Florida Board of Governors