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# Expanded free speech zones' reception cool

## Rights groups still seeks end to rules

BY JAKE STUMP

The Dominion Post

A Philadelphia-based civil rights group has conditionally approved of WVU's recent decision to expand the free speech zone areas on WVU's campus.

In a letter addressed to WVU President David C. Hardesty Jr., the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, said, "The ad hoc committee you appointed has come up with a proposal that substantially improves the environment for discourse at WVU."

However, FIRE stands behind the WVU Free Speech Consortium and the Students for Economic Justice in their continuing efforts to push WVU officials to declare the entire campus as a "free speech zone."

The university's interim policy expands an earlier one that gave students just two small areas on campus in which to gather for protests and demonstrations.

Students now have seven free speech areas but they must make reservations at least 24 hours in advance for activities scheduled outside normal business hours and/or that will attract more than 50 attendants, the policy says.

The seven zones for protests and demonstrations include sectioned-off areas of the Mountainlair, Student Rec Center, Law School, Health Science Center, Creative Arts Center, Coliseum and Evansdale Library.

Groups, students and faculty say that the updated policy still violates First Amendment rights.

"Although the proposed policy is a step in the right direction, it is far from ideal, and it even contains several provisions of questionable constitutionality," said Greg Lukianoff, FIRE director of legal and public advocacy. "The most troubling provision states that the vice president for student affairs will hold students responsible for security costs for an event if, in his estimation, the student event will require the presence of (Department of) Public Safety officers."

"That's been the most commonly expressed concern," said Dr. Robert Griffith, chair of the ad-hoc free speech committee. "I'm certain there'll be revisions to the policy."

The policy also lists permitted speech activities within the campus that include:

- \* Silent or symbolic protest such as wearing expressive clothing, gesturing or standing.
- \* Signs may be posted on "public use" bulletin boards.
- \* Literature may be distributed outside any university building except residence halls and medical clinics.
- \* Picketing "in an orderly fashion" may occur with 15 participants or less outside any university building except residence halls and medical clinics. Picketing with more than 15 participants is considered a protest or demonstration.

"I think you will find that any concern you have about having an open campus will be more than offset by the benefits of the dynamic environment that is created when a university is unafraid to grant its students the freedom they deserve," Lukianoff wrote.

Students frustrated with the free expression areas created their own permission slips and submitted 365, one for each day of the year, for 25,000 members of the WVU community to the administration Thursday.

The interim policy has been posted for public comment until Tuesday and the ad-hoc free speech committee will submit a revised draft to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee April 22.

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