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### Is Mayor Bloomberg OK With Being Duped By Tufts University?

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Two months ago, as president of the [Foundation for Individual Rights in Education](#) (FIRE), I wrote [an open letter to Mayor Michael Bloomberg](#) to inform him that he had been badly deceived. I'm still waiting for an answer.

Back in May, Mayor Bloomberg delivered [Tufts University's commencement address](#). In the course of his speech, the Mayor praised Tufts for dealing with *The Primary Source* (TPS), a campus paper which had over the school year written articles that offended some students, without resorting to censorship or official punishment. Bloomberg said, "I think the students and the faculty and all of Tufts University deserve an enormous amount of respect because you respected the rights of others to express themselves." Unfortunately, what the Mayor didn't know is that a Tufts disciplinary committee had actually decided, just weeks prior to his address, [to find the paper guilty of harassment](#) for publishing two articles.

So what precisely had *The Primary Source* published? The first article was a satirical Christmas carol poking fun at affirmative action. While it may be understandable that students would be upset by the edgy satire, what seems to have been the tipping point was when TPS published the second article months later. Entitled "Islam--Arabic Translation: Submission," the article responded to what TPS saw as an overly rosy depiction of Islam during Tufts' "Islamic Awareness Week."

Relying on quotes from the Koran and unflattering but factual declarations about Islam such as "Author Salman Rushdie needed to go into hiding after Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini declared a fatwa calling for his death for writing *The Satanic Verses*," and "The seven nations in the world that punish homosexuality with death all have fundamentalist Muslim governments," the article kicked up considerable controversy on campus. Of crucial importance, all of the statements in the article were true. (Looking into it, however, I discovered that there are eight Islamic theocracies that punish homosexuality with death, but that hardly undermines the article's point.)

And this is precisely what makes Tufts' decision to punish TPS so dangerous: If factually true statements can be banned at Tufts as "harassment," what exactly do the school's [extensive guarantees of free speech](#) even mean?

It's clear from his speech that Mayor Bloomberg either did not know or had been misinformed about Tuft's handling of the case. But I have it on pretty good information that Bloomberg has been informed about the discrepancy between his praise and the university's actions not just once, but several times over. Two months later, the harassment finding against *The Primary Source* still stands, and Bloomberg has been completely mum.

So is Mayor Bloomberg OK with being duped into publicly complimenting Tufts for defending free speech when it did exactly the opposite? Given [his public statements supporting free speech on campus](#), it's hard to believe he would be. So what's the hold up? A well-placed word from the Mayor could probably convince Tufts to undo this finding in no time flat.

On Wednesday, FIRE sent Tufts President Lawrence Bacow [another letter](#) about this shameful case. Bloomberg and his staff were CCed. I hope this time around Mayor Bloomberg will be willing to publicly ask Tufts to live up to its own ideals and restore free speech on campus.

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