

CAMPUS WATCH

They *Dared* To Joke

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The CRs had advertised a fictitious \$100 "scholarship" for white, heterosexual, American males — an intentionally unsubtle jab at URI's many scholarships offered on the basis of race and gender.

The URI Student Senate demanded a public apology — supposedly to the students who were "injured" by spending their time applying for the mock "scholarship." It's plain, of course, that the student government

wanted to slap the CRs down for their politically incorrect joke.

As the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education noted in a letter to the senate, the First Amendment strongly protects satirical expression. More important, as bad as it may be to tell people what they *cannot* say, it is still worse to tell them what they *must* say — as does the demand for the apology.

URI President Robert Carothers' response was sensible: He told the Senate in no uncertain terms that its actions were wrong. But the student government on April 15 brazenly derecognized the CRs — a penalty

that robs the group of all its rights as a student group including its share of student fees and access to other school resources.

URI's student government seems to think itself above the law — able to take fees extracted from students by a state university, while ignoring the constitutional obligations that come with that power.

The entire Senate will hold an official vote on the CRs' status today.

Authored by the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (thefire.org), a nonprofit group dedicated to defending constitutional rights at U.S. colleges and universities.

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