



## Foundation for Individual Rights in Education

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November 6, 2012

Frank R. Lamas  
Vice President for Student Affairs  
University of Texas at Arlington  
701 South Nedderman Drive, Suite 350  
Arlington, Texas 76019

*Sent via U.S. Mail and Facsimile (817-272-6084)*

Dear Vice President Lamas:

We are in receipt of your October 3 response to our letter of September 13, 2012. Thank you for your attention to FIRE's concerns regarding freedom of expression and freedom of assembly at the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA). We appreciate your statement that "[s]tudents on our campus are given the opportunity to express their views individually and in organized groups, orally and in writing or by other symbols on our campus."

While FIRE recognizes and appreciates your endorsement of freedom of speech for UTA students and student organizations, UTA's response fails to address the very concern for free speech that prompted FIRE's initial letter: the ban on "wearing of letters on campus" UTA imposed on the Sigma Phi Epsilon (Sig Ep) fraternity during a disciplinary investigation. As we noted in our letter, this restriction applied to "both on and off campus activities" and "formal and informal group gatherings," resulting in impermissible violations of Sig Ep's members' basic rights of free expression and freedom of assembly. As UTA policy clearly states that "Greek chapters are officially regarded as recognized student organizations," FIRE worries that these same First Amendment violations may be visited upon members of other student organizations at UTA as well.

Although FIRE remains concerned about the restrictions that were placed on Sig Ep's members' expression, we are hopeful that UTA will commit itself to ensuring that the First Amendment rights of its students and student organizations will receive the fullest protections they are owed going forward. We now ask the University of Texas at Arlington to clarify that students will not be prohibited from expressing their affiliations with student organizations or any other organizations, and that UTA disciplinary processes will never interfere with UTA students' constitutional rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

Again, we appreciate UTA's attention to our concerns, and we hope to commend the university for using this opportunity to take a firm stand for the First Amendment rights of its students. We respectfully request a response to this letter by November 20, 2012.

Sincerely,



Peter Bonilla

Associate Director, Individual Rights Defense Program

cc:

James D. Spaniolo, President