

TJ Roberts

SACSCOC

Complaint

12 July 2019

Transylvania University

IA. Theodore J. Roberts

IB. [REDACTED]

IC. [REDACTED] KY, [REDACTED]

ID. [REDACTED]

IE. [REDACTED]

IF. Transylvania University

IG. Student

IH. Enrolled

IIA. Transylvania University has multiple policies that violate the fundamental speech rights of

students, violating not only their own stated values, but also the spirit of education and

SACSCOC's very Philosophy of Accreditation. By restricting speech to a heavily obstructed

quarantine zone and requiring a heavily bureaucratic permit process (Supporting Document 2a),

Transylvania University has fostered a climate that is hostile to open expression, the exchange of

ideas, and dissenting beliefs. Transylvania's "Free Speech, Protests and Demonstration Policy"

directly goes against the values of SACSCOC and devalues the liberal arts education

Transylvania University promises. Given that this university has used this policy to target student

groups, it is clear that Transylvania University has created a free speech crisis for itself that

directly contradicts SACSCOC's standards.

IIB. Statement of Facts can be viewed in Supporting Document 2a. On May 1st of 2019, Transylvania's Young Democratic Socialists of America (YDSA) tabled outside the speech quarantine zone without interference. The next day, however, the Young Americans for Freedom (YAF) chapter tabled at the same time, place, and manner as the previous student organization. The difference, however, is that the administration shut down the YAF chapter two minutes after they set up. In this blatant act of viewpoint discrimination, Transylvania showed the dangerous nature of their so-called "Free Speech, Protests and Demonstration Policy." During this incident, Dean of Students Michael Covert threatened the students with even more restrictive policies. While the university has claimed to the media that they will be reviewing their policies over the summer (Supporting Document 4f), we have been informed by an unnamed respondent to Will Creeley's letter to Transylvania University (Supporting Document 2) that they are committed to enforcing these anti-free speech policies that go against SACSCOC's philosophy recognizing the "right of students to access opportunities for learning and for the open expression and exchange of ideas." The policies that Transylvania University has implemented violates the Philosophy of Accreditation, and the very nature of education itself. By requiring permission slips to talk to other students (Supporting Document 1a, 1c), Transylvania University explicitly violates SACSCOC's accreditation standards, their promise of free speech (Supporting Document 1b, 2bi, 3a, 3c), and the reasonable expectations of students. The initial act of institutional censorship occurred on May 2nd, 2019. I and my fellow students have explored our options since that incident.

IIC. I am currently receiving help from the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) regarding these illiberal speech restrictions. The students involved have met with the administration on multiple occasions (Supporting Document 4g). These meetings, however, have

led to no resolution. With this in mind, Will Creeley, an attorney with FIRE, sent a letter to the University explaining why they have failed to meet their contractual obligations to respect the free speech rights of students (Supporting Document 2). The University sent an abysmally insufficient response to our legal concerns in which they pledged to continue these policies that not only violate their contract with the student body, but also violates their contract with SACSCOC (Supporting Document 6), and has not responded since. Aside from this Accreditation Complaint, we have exhausted all other options outside of the legal realm. At the moment, I am not considering legal action against the university.

This complaint will not be processed unless all the boxes below are checked and you have signed and dated the complaint.

- I have read “Complaint Procedures Against SACSCOC or its Accredited Institutions” and agree this form constitutes my formal complaint.
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- I authorize SACSCOC to submit my complaint and/or any documents concerning my complaint to the involved institution(s).
- I hereby certify that all of the information I have given above is true and complete to the best of my knowledge.

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