



January 11, 2021

Jon Yates
Global Marketing & Communications
Northwestern University
1603 Orrington Avenue
Evanston, Illinois 60201

Sent via Electronic Mail (jon.yates@northwestern.edu)

Dear Mr. Yates:

FIRE appreciates your December 15, 2020, response to our letter of December 10, 2020, regarding our specific concerns with Northwestern University's "Filming and Photography" policy.¹

We likewise recognize and appreciate Northwestern's reiteration of its commitment to a free press and maintenance of a top journalism program. However, while Northwestern's policies may not be substantially different from those of other private universities, Northwestern is responsible for its own conduct, and others' inadequate policies cannot justify limiting the rights of students at Northwestern. It's no surprise that other institutions have similarly-defective policies: That is why we have written to many other universities similarly expressing concern about their respective media policies.²

As we said in our December 10 letter, FIRE has spoken with numerous student journalists at colleges and universities across the nation who are concerned about how their institutions' media policies might restrict—and have restricted—their ability to gather news. The fact that similar policies have been applied to student journalists at other universities leaves room for a chilling effect that is not consistent with Northwestern's stated commitments to free expression and the free press.

¹ *Filming and Photography*, NORTHWESTERN NOW, NORTHWESTERN UNIV., <https://news.northwestern.edu/for-journalists/filming-photography> (last visited Dec. 8, 2020).

² Lindsie Rank, *FIRE urges 15 top colleges and universities to improve restrictive press policies*, FOUND. FOR INDIV. RIGHTS IN EDUC., Nov. 12, 2020, <https://www.thefire.org/fire-urges-15-top-colleges-and-universities-to-improve-restrictive-press-policies>.

We are glad to hear that Northwestern's media policies do not apply to the journalistic work of students, staff, or faculty. However, student journalists—or administrators applying the policy in the future—may not understand this because it is not noted in the policy itself. To that end, FIRE strongly believes that it would be beneficial, both to student journalists and to Northwestern, to clarify within the published policy that it does not apply to student journalists. This will serve a dual purpose of dissipating the potential chilling effect on student journalists and ensuring the policy will not be applied in such a manner in the future.

We hope that Northwestern will take this opportunity to amend its media policies to clarify that they do not apply to students who are journalists. As offered in our letters of November 10 and December 10, FIRE would be pleased to extend our support and assistance as Northwestern undergoes these policy revisions.

We request receipt of a response to this letter no later than the close of business on January 25, 2021.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sabrina Conza".

Sabrina Conza
Program Analyst, Individual Rights Defense Program