



FIRE

Foundation for Individual
Rights and Expression

March 7, 2023

Robin H. Jones
Chief University Counsel
University of Alabama
Rose Administration
Box 870106
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35487

Sent via U.S. Mail and Electronic Mail (rjones@uasystem.edu)

Dear Mr. Jones:

FIRE appreciates your continued engagement with our concerns about the University of Alabama's statement responding to pro-Kanye West chalked messages—a statement we believe has chilled students' protected speech at the university. While we appreciate the university's continued relationship with FIRE, its excellent policies, and your recognition that offensive expression is protected, we urge UA to be more mindful of its application of those policies moving forward to ensure it does not chill student speech.

As UA expresses its own views and criticizes subjectively offensive expression, you must be conscious of how the university announces investigations of such messages. Here, FIRE would not have been concerned had you cited the university's content-neutral time, place, and manner restrictions in announcing investigation of the chalked messages, rather than citing your "core values" and "Capstone Creed." However, your statement unfortunately implied that the chalked messages were being investigated for their content, rather than their violation of time, place, and manner policies.

We commend you for affirming that offensive expression remains protected under UA policy and the First Amendment, and we look forward to UA abiding by those policies and protecting expressive rights in the future.

Sincerely,

Sabrina Conza
Program Officer, Campus Rights Advocacy