

From: Dean Jenny S. Martinez <[externalrelations@law.stanford.edu](mailto:externalrelations@law.stanford.edu)>

Date: Mon, Mar 13, 2023 at 3:55 PM

Subject: A Message on Free Speech from Dean Martinez

To: [REDACTED]

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# Stanford Law School

Dear SLS Alumni,

I want to thank those of you who have reached out to me and others at SLS to share your reactions to the event on March 9, 2023, hosted by the student chapter of the Federalist Society and featuring Judge Kyle Duncan of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. Your care for SLS is evident in your messages, and in all that you do to advance and steward our school.

Freedom of speech is a bedrock principle for our community at SLS, the university, and our democratic society. Since becoming Dean in 2019, my commitment to free speech has only deepened. I firmly believe that we can and must do better to ensure that it continues even in polarized times.

In the past few years, SLS has hosted a number of events with controversial speakers on campus without incident. We are very clear with our students that, given our commitment to free expression, if there are speakers they disagree with, they are welcome to exercise their right to protest but not to disrupt the proceedings. [Our disruption policy](#) states that students are not allowed to “prevent the effective carrying out” of a “public event” whether by heckling or other forms of interruption. Consistent with our practice, protesting students are provided alternative spaces to voice their opinions freely. While students in the room may do things such as quietly holding signs or asking pointed questions during question and answer periods, they may not do so in a way that disrupts the event or prevents the speaker from delivering their remarks.

The way the event with Judge Duncan unfolded was not aligned with our institutional commitment to freedom of speech. Staff members who should have enforced university policies failed to do so and instead intervened in inappropriate ways that are not aligned with the university’s commitment to free speech.

As I have shared with you all before—and will continue to affirm during my deanship—Stanford Law School is deeply committed to free speech. President Tessier-Lavigne and I have apologized to Judge Duncan. The school is reviewing what transpired and will work to ensure that protocols are in place so that disruptions of this nature do not occur again. SLS is committed to the conduct of events on terms that are consistent with the disruption policy and the principles of free speech and critical inquiry that they support.

Sincerely,



Jenny S. Martinez  
Richard E. Lang Professor of Law and Dean of Stanford Law School

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