

December 10, 2025

Via Electronic Mail

Marie McMullan
Student Press Counsel, Campus Rights Advocacy
Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression
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Re: December 3, 2025 Letter to The University of Alabama (UA)

Dear Marie-

Thank you for your recent letter. The University has a long-standing commitment to protect the First Amendment rights of all members of our campus community and greatly appreciates the work FIRE does to advance those rights. To that end, we have enjoyed a productive relationship with FIRE for several years, frequently collaborating closely on issues aimed at preserving and expanding campus opportunities for expression. Considering this extended relationship between FIRE and UA, it is disappointing that, rather than reach out to us directly by email or phone to discuss concerns and seek clarity, FIRE has elected to send an accusatory letter that is based on false assumptions and misinformation.

As you presumably know, UA is a public flagship university comprised of over 50,000 students, faculty, and staff who hold a wide variety of ideas, beliefs, and viewpoints. The University consistently works to create a welcoming campus community that provides a broad spectrum of engagement and expression opportunities for our students, including in the area of student media. All publications within our student media are supported through the University, but UA has no editorial influence on those publications. The students have exercised—and will continue to exercise—full editorial autonomy regarding content.

Contrary to the assumptions made in your correspondence, no one can credibly claim that the University has censored, controlled, quashed, edited, or otherwise diluted the editorial independence of student journalists to publish whatever content or viewpoint they wish to include in UA student media. Further, the University's decision to create a new, more broadly focused magazine that will include a wider variety of topics actually expands student opportunities. Indeed, there will be opportunities in this new publication to cover topics and content that previously appeared in *Alice* and *Nineteen Fifty-Six*, as well as opportunities

for more students to publish on other topics.¹ In short, UA's recent action effectively provides opportunities for *more* students to share *more* content, subject matters, and viewpoints that may be of interest to *more* students. Far from limiting speech, funding a magazine that has a broader impact and is more welcoming to all members of the campus community is consistent with free speech values and UA's core mission of providing quality educational opportunities for all of our students.

Again, we reiterate our disappointment in receiving this correspondence, which serves as the latest example of FIRE unnecessarily undermining its credibility. This approach does not incentivize colleges and universities to work with FIRE, particularly when these poorly formed missives become part of a school's Free Speech Ranking.² We would respectfully request that FIRE consider a more constructive approach to communicating with schools about concerns—one that leans less on speculation, inaccurate media reports, demands, or condemnation. Doing so would be more consistent with FIRE's stated mission and would go a long way towards fostering cooperative relationships with institutions who have repeatedly shown their commitment to the principles of free speech.

Please feel free to reach out to me with any future concerns related to the University. We look forward to additional opportunities for productive collaboration. Thanks again.

Sincerely,



Robin H. Jones
Chief University Counsel

¹ *Alice* and *Nineteen Fifty-Six* are UA's only campus-wide magazines, and both received significant funding, staffing, and resources from UA. The new campus magazine will likewise receive UA funding, staffing, and resources.

² This is one of several deficiencies in the methodology behind FIRE's College Free Speech Ranking that contribute to misleading results about the reality of the environment on a given campus. We would welcome the opportunity to engage with FIRE on enhancing that assessment process.