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Newsletter of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education
THE FIRE QUARTERLY

January 20, 2003

To: Committee on Student Organizations

From: Andrea Kiser and Sarah Canale

Re: Advocates for Conservative Thought (ACT)

ENCLOSED: Constitution for ACT and formal proposal

We would first like to thank the Committee on Student Organizations for getting back to us and explaining your reasoning. Advocates for Conservative Thought would like to affirm your explanations in part and point out vital clarifications in part.

We would like to point out a large disparity in material fact between the reasoning outlined in your January 14th letter and what we tangibly and unequivocally demonstrated. In the letter signed by co-chair Valerie Figueredo, COSO states, "As stated in your constitution one of your objectives is to, 'advocate for conservative ideas through aiding conservative candidates and issues via forums, recruitment, meetings and political action.'" This was cited as the leading cause for our overlap with the College Republicans.

However, the highlighted statement is *not anywhere* within the Advocates for Conservative Thought (ACT) Constitution and consequently cannot and does not apply to ACT. The statement used was within another group's constitution: the Conservative Advocacy and Action Club – that group was rejected for an overlap with the College Republicans. It must be pointed out that we are not inquiring into COSO's rejection of the Conservative Advocacy and Action Club (CAA). We are only inquiring into ACT's rejection. While CAA did have similar membership and similar proponents, the purpose of that first group was totally different than

ACT's clear purpose.

ACT is a different organization altogether from CAA and it has a different constitution altogether. I will point out *section 6 of the ACT constitution*, which states: "Advocates for Conservative Thought *shall not endorse, support, or oppose any candidate or proposed legislation, or expend funds to intervene in any political campaign on behalf of any candidate or proposed legislation.*"

Furthermore, the COSO letter states that there was "careful consideration and discussion" of our proposal, therefore it surprises members of ACT that such a large oversight was made. Regardless of the cause for this oversight, we point to this as the primary cause for a dispute in your reasoning for rejecting ACT.

We would like to agree with COSO's point in their first letter that "all the necessary paperwork was filed with COSO and the required steps were taken for organization approval. Therefore, your organization was not denied for a lack of proper paperwork."

It is therefore ACT's understanding that the only reason that now stands for rejecting ACT was because one of our *many* functions, *in someway*, mirrors the ideologically neutral group called the Council for Democracy. We would like to point out that in ACT's formal proposal there were four main functions of our club and six purposes in our constitution; only one function was to bring in a guest speaker. However, it should be noted that the Council for Democracy is not the only organization that brings in speakers at UM – the Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Community does (as stated on their Web site) and the campus branch of the ACLU likely does as well. Certainly, there are others. It also should be noted that many campus groups overlap one another in some way – not unlike this slight mirroring.

It is necessary to point out that in your January 14th letter it is stated that "According to the authority granted the Committee on Student Organizations by the Vice President of Student Affairs for the University of Miami, COSO has the ability to deny a student group 'student organization' status at the University if there is another student organization that already serves the same purpose on campus." It is our assertion that COSO did *not* fulfill this requirement in rejecting ACT. There is no student organization, as was just demonstrated, that already serves the same purpose on



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campus – the purpose that we are referring to is within ACT’s constitution.

To make your referencing easier, we will enclose a copy of ACT’s formal proposal and constitution that was submitted to COSO, with highlighting on the quoted portions of the constitution. We are requesting two things at this point. A response to this letter from your organization affirming the facts pointed out in this letter. We are also requesting that in light of this development – ACT be granted full approval by COSO. Since COSO’s reasoning has been shown to be flawed, we are simply asking for the quickest and most reasonable remedy to this problem.

We kindly request that COSO respond to this letter within five (5) business days upon receipt of this letter.

Very Truly,

Andrea Kiser and Sarah Canale
Advocates for Conservative Thought

Because Your Liberty is a Precious Thing
