



Division of Student Affairs
Office of the Vice President

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December 10, 2007

Mr. Adam Kissel
Director, Individual Rights Defense Program
Foundation For Individual Rights In Education
601 Walnut Street, Suite 510
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106

Dear Mr. Kissel:

I have received and carefully considered your letter of November 29, 2007 concerning the posters advertising the showing of the movie "Obsession" at the University of Florida and my related email of November 26th. My response addresses issues and does not confirm or correct any of the facts as stated in your letter.

Your letter makes critical points about the importance of protecting First Amendment rights of freedom of speech. The University of Florida embraces both the requirements and the values of the First Amendment even in circumstances where doing so is difficult.

Attached is a clarification that I have sent to all students and have copied to Professor Willis. Among the clarifications made are the university's support of the rights of students to freely express themselves; confirmation that there will be no discipline taken, nor was any discipline ever considered, against anyone involved in creating or distributing the posters; and a statement denouncing any removal of posters from proper venues. In response to your question, of course we are not investigating anyone involved in creating or distributing the posters.

I appreciate FIRE's willingness to share its concerns and to give me this opportunity to clarify the university's position.

Sincerely,

Patricia Telles-Irvin
Vice President for Student Affairs

Cc: Jamie Lewis Keith, Vice President and General Counsel

The Foundation for The Gator Nation
An Equal Opportunity Institution

To: All UF students
From: Patricia Telles-Irvin, Vice President for Student Affairs
Subject: My e-mail last week

There has been much discussion about an e-mail I sent Nov. 26 regarding the posters advertising the movie "Obsession."

Since that time, some important dialogue has been exchanged between members of the student groups involved. But over the last week, there has been some misunderstanding on the university's position on certain points. Please allow me to clarify.

- The university supports the rights of students to freely express themselves on any issue.
- The university condemns terrorists acts and those who perpetrate them, regardless of who they are. And we clearly recognize there are people who use Islam to support violence.
- The university has no intention of taking disciplinary action against anyone involved in creating or distributing the posters. That was never a consideration.
- The university has heard allegations that the posters were removed by people who opposed their message. Efforts by the University Police Department and Student Affairs to confirm this or identify offenders were unsuccessful. Removal of posters from proper venues is prohibited by the university's policies and will not be tolerated.

The original intent of my e-mail was to foster greater understanding and communication among groups. As we all surely know, free speech is a cherished right not only in this country but also on this campus. We should always feel comfortable expressing our diverse opinions.