

TEXAS  STATE  
UNIVERSITY  
SAN MARCOS  
*The rising STAR of Texas*™

December 14, 2017

Mr. Ari Z. Cohn, Esquire, Director  
Individual Rights Defense Program

Mr. Hadar Harris, Executive Director  
Student Press Law Center

Mr. Christopher Finan, Executive Director  
National Coalition Against Censorship

Foundation for Individual Rights in Education  
510 Walnut Street, Suite 1250  
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Sent via U.S. Mail and Electronic Mail ([ari@thefire.org](mailto:ari@thefire.org); [hharris@splc.org](mailto:hharris@splc.org); and [chris@ncac.org](mailto:chris@ncac.org))

Dear Messrs. Cohn, Mr. Harris, and Mr. Finan,

While no authority of which we are aware compels Texas State University to respond to your December 7, 2017 letter the importance of the issues you raise requires clarification and correction of the facts. Your five principal points are addressed seriatim.

1. **Allegation that *The University Star* was de-funded.**

**This allegation is incorrect. *The University Star* was not de-funded.** The newspaper is funded by Student Service Fees (SSF) and sale of advertisements. The SSF Committee allocates funds during the annual budgetary process; no emergency meeting has been called and no funding changes made. The de-funding threat you reference was made by a person with no authority to speak for the university or de-fund *The University Star*.

2. **Allegation that the university is investigating *The University Star's* editorial review process.**

**This allegation is incorrect. The university is not investigating nor has it threatened to investigate the newspaper's editorial review process.** To the contrary, *The*

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*University Star* Editors, voluntary announced that they had made a decision to examine their own editorial practices -- an independent decision that was neither directed nor prompted by the university.

**3. Allegation that the university is creating a review committee to examine *The University Star's* editorial review process.**

**This allegation is incorrect.** While the university took initial steps to create an **advisory** committee to review workplace procedures and policy, a committee does not currently exist; and, there are no plans, at this time, to move forward with such a committee.

**4. Allegation that *The University Star* fired an opinion columnist for writing the editorial at issue.**

**This allegation is incorrect.** The columnist could not have been “fired” because he was never a paid employee of *The University Star* but a freelance writer, who contributed opinion pieces to the newspaper. *The University Star* Editors announced: “We have also chosen not to retain this columnist.” This was an independent decision that was neither directed nor prompted by the university.

**5. Allegation that university discussion of an advisory committee created a chilling effect on *The University Star*.**

**This allegation is resoundingly refuted by subsequent events.** *The University Star* has since published numerous letters (both in support and against the opinion piece in question) to the editor in both its print and online editions, two of which were particularly critical of the president’s “contra-editorial” to the university community. The university believes that the vigorous debate that ensued evidences the independence and freedom that *The University Star* Editors continue to enjoy.

We trust this addresses the concerns raised in your letter.

Sincerely,



Dr. Vicki Brittain  
Special Assistant to the President  
Texas State University