



Annual Report

2017-2018



FIRE
Foundation for Individual
Rights in Education



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The past year has been one marked by both considerable achievements and considerable challenges. While there can no longer be any doubt of the serious problems on campus and the broader deterioration of the culture of free expression, FIRE's record provides clear evidence that our committed advocacy and comprehensive outreach continues to protect individuals, promote reform, encourage awareness, and empower activism.

During the 2017-18 year, thanks to the support of our donors, FIRE expanded into new areas, strengthened the capacity of our existing programs, engaged in creative and effective initiatives, and continued to seek ways to advance our mission. Through that work, we were able to secure widespread accomplishments in the midst of significant threats. Whether one considers those threats or our success, one thing is evident: FIRE's work has never been more critical and our impact has never been more apparent.

The number of campus rights abuses reported to FIRE continues to grow. FIRE received over 900 requests for help from students and faculty in 2017 alone. In particular, FIRE saw a spike in the number of cases involving faculty members targeted for controversial speech, especially in online forums. That trend is a troubling sign of the increasing creep of censorship into new spaces, and of the ongoing need for FIRE's strong advocacy.

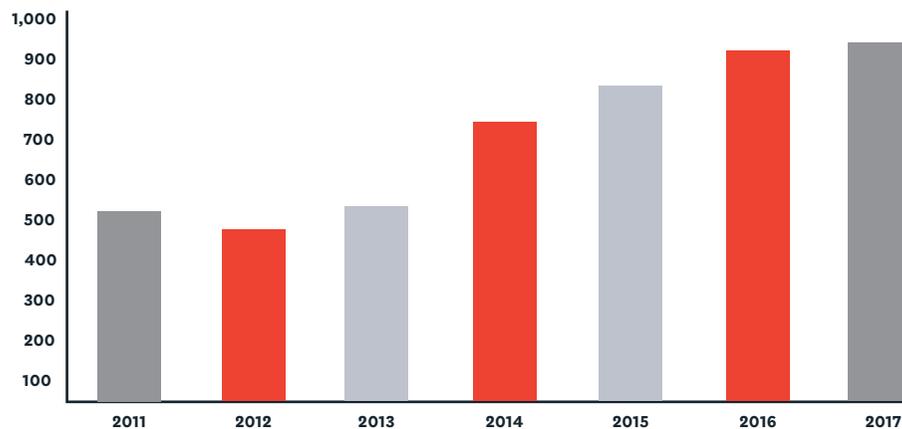


Regis University
Credit: Jpock at English Wikipedia

Our defense work once again demonstrated FIRE's commitment to protect *all* expression. Our cases included victories on behalf of:

- A Regis University student who organized a bake sale that offered different prices depending on students' gender, race, sexuality, or religion, which was shut down by administrators for being a critical "demonstration."
- A Fresno State University professor targeted after she used her personal Twitter account to criticize the Bush family and the Iraq War and to rejoice in Barbara Bush's passing.
- A University of California, Los Angeles chapter of Young Americans for Liberty that faced high security fees simply to prevent them from hosting a "controversial" speaker.
- Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute students sanctioned for peacefully protesting administrative policy during the school's homecoming weekend.
- A Wichita State University fraternity threatened with a Title IX investigation for posting a banner outside of its fraternity house.

THE NUMBER OF CASE SUBMISSIONS FIRE RECEIVES EACH CALENDAR YEAR CONTINUES TO GROW.



THE INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS DEFENSE PROGRAM WON 31 DIRECT ADVOCACY VICTORIES ON BEHALF OF INDIVIDUALS—ITS HIGHEST ANNUAL RECORD TO DATE, AND ASSISTED HUNDREDS OF OTHERS BEHIND THE SCENES.

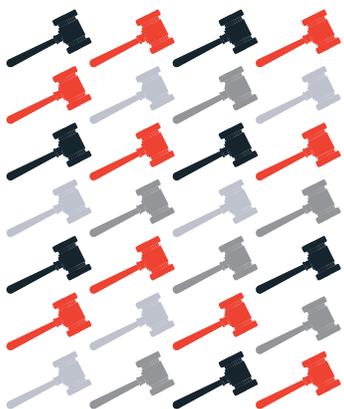


“Thank you again for not only protecting my speech rights, but also for educating the public about what exactly that means.”

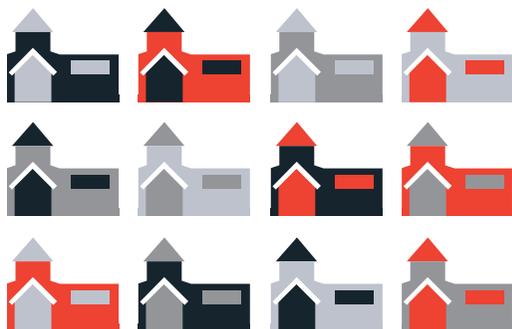
A professor on her experience working with our defense staff

With so much of the campus narrative focused on controversial speakers, minority marginalization, and partisanship and polarization, more and more administrators are hesitant to take a strong policy stand for free speech on campus, instead preferring to reassure students and stress “inclusivity.” Despite this, FIRE continues to advance policy reform.

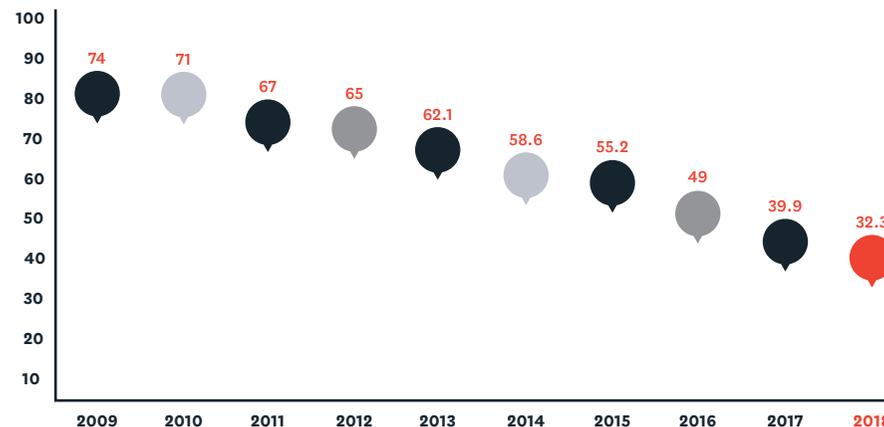
FIRE’S POLICY REFORM PROJECT WON 28 POLICY CHANGE VICTORIES AFFECTING NEARLY 475,000 STUDENTS.



12 SCHOOLS OR UNIVERSITY SYSTEMS ADOPTED A VERSION OF “THE CHICAGO STATEMENT ON PRINCIPLES OF FREE EXPRESSION” IN FAVOR OF FREE SPEECH AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM. A TOTAL OF 42 HAVE ADOPTED THE STATEMENT SINCE FIRE FIRST BEGAN TO PROMOTE IT.



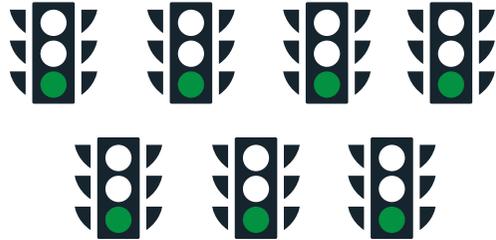
THE PERCENTAGE OF “RED LIGHT” COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES THAT SYSTEMATICALLY VIOLATE STUDENTS’ AND FACULTY MEMBERS’ RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION DROPPED TO 32.3 PERCENT.



“Your cordiality, combined with your thorough expertise in First Amendment law, makes you a uniquely effective advocate, in my humble opinion.”

A university administrator on working with FIRE’s policy reform team

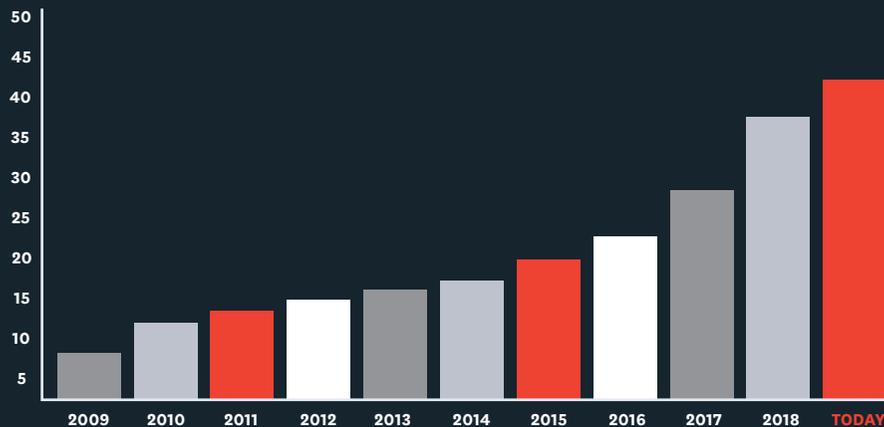
FIRE WELCOMED SEVEN SCHOOLS TO OUR “GREEN LIGHT” LIST, WORKING WITH THEM TO REVISE ALL OF THEIR RESTRICTIVE POLICIES AND FREEING NEARLY 110,000 STUDENTS FROM SPEECH CODES.



APPALACHIAN STATE UNIVERSITY
AUBURN UNIVERSITY
CLAREMONT MCKENNA COLLEGE
KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

MICHIGAN TECH UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA, WILMINGTON

OUR SPEECH CODE REPORTS HAVE RECORDED A GROWING NUMBER OF GREEN LIGHT SCHOOLS IN RECENT YEARS.



Auburn University
2017-18 green light inductee



Ivette Salazar
Joliet Junior College student plaintiff

Even in the midst of successful defense campaigns and policy reform efforts, campus rights remain at risk. Consider the results of FIRE’s first-ever survey of due process policies at the nation’s top 53 colleges and universities, which found that 85 percent of those schools receive a “D” or “F” grade for not ensuring student due process rights. Further, 73.6 percent do not even clearly guarantee students that they will be presumed innocent until proven guilty! Fortunately, FIRE made important national policy gains this year and we continue to seek new ways to aggressively advocate for campus rights.



Jeff Sessions

Credit: Gage Skidmore

FIRE’s biggest victory came in September, when the Department of Education rescinded the policy framework put in place under its controversial April 2011 “Dear Colleague” letter. That letter had instituted a number of policies that seriously jeopardized campus due process rights. FIRE led the fight against the government’s guidance, working through public awareness efforts, legislative work, and a powerful lawsuit to challenge its legality.

IN MARCH, FLORIDA BECAME THE NINTH STATE TO PASS A LAW PROHIBITING “FREE SPEECH ZONES” AT PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS.



THE MILLION VOICES CAMPAIGN SECURED SIX VICTORIES THROUGH ACTION IN AND OUT OF COURT, WHICH AFFECTED OVER 60,000 STUDENTS.



FIRE IS CURRENTLY COORDINATING FOUR MAJOR LAWSUITS NATIONWIDE.



Attorney General Jeff Sessions delivered an important address in September on campus rights issues, during which he cited FIRE’s speech code research and litigation work.

“The era of ‘rule by letter’ is over.”

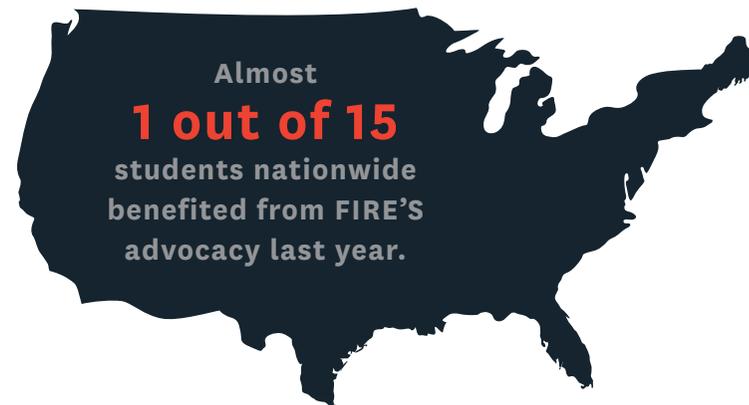
*Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos
announcing the reversal of the 2011 “Dear Colleague” letter*

In October, the Department of Justice filed a statement of interest supporting FIRE's arguments in our ongoing lawsuit against Pierce College and the Los Angeles Community College District. That good news was followed in January by a very strong ruling denying the defendant's motion to dismiss and rejecting the school's claims of a constitutional "free speech zone."

This spring, FIRE's Stand Up For Speech lawsuit against Iowa State University administrators officially concluded, with a judge awarding the plaintiffs nearly \$600,000 in damages and fees. Added to the amounts previously awarded or settled upon, Iowa State was forced to pay almost \$1 million due to their abuse of student rights.



Paul Gerlich and Erin Furleigh
Iowa State University student plaintiffs



IN SUM, DESPITE EXISTING CHALLENGES AND NEW THREATS, FIRE'S RECORD IS CLEAR. WE WON 67 VICTORIES AFFECTING OVER 1.4 MILLION STUDENTS.



"[FIRE's] brand is principles over politics."
The Chronicle of Higher Education

FIRE HAS WON 11 LITIGATION VICTORIES AFFECTING NEARLY 280,000 STUDENTS SINCE 2013.

280,000
students



FIRE has won almost **200** victories in the last three years alone— **40%** of our total victory record since 1999.





2017 FSN SUMMER CONFERENCE

More and more students are turning to the heckler's veto to silence speakers with whom they disagree. In fact, such incidents recorded by FIRE during the 2016–17 academic year represented almost half of the total we've cataloged since 2000. As a result, many colleges and universities have begun to stop inviting any speaker who could possibly invite controversy, moving the academy one step further away from its role as a marketplace of ideas. That's why FIRE's educational efforts remain as important as ever.

LET THEM SPEAK!

"Let Them Speak"
*FIRE's spring 2018
 campus activism toolkit*

The FSN released an activism kit during the spring semester specifically focused on issues related to disinvitations and shout-downs. "Let Them Speak!" challenged students to take steps to protect speech on campus and to use their voices to foster a culture that celebrates and embraces robust intellectual discourse and eschews censorship. In May, FIRE awarded three prizes to those students who had coordinated the best campaigns using the kit.

THE FIRE STUDENT NETWORK (FSN) ADDED ALMOST 1,200 NEW MEMBERS.



FIRE STAFF SPOKE AT 38 COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES AROUND THE COUNTRY.



Matthew Foldi and Natalie Bao Tram Le
 2017 Prometheus Society inductees,
 recognized by FIRE for their campus advocacy

According to FIRE's groundbreaking 2017 survey of campus opinion about free expression, 63 percent of very liberal students and 45 percent of very conservative students agree that it is important to be part of a campus community where they are *not* exposed to intolerant or offensive ideas—a reflection of how new concepts of “comfort” are jeopardizing free inquiry. FIRE continues to fight such attitudes through our outreach programs.

109 STUDENTS ATTENDED FIRE'S SUMMER CONFERENCE IN JULY 2017, AND 102 ATTENDED OUR EVENT IN JULY 2018.



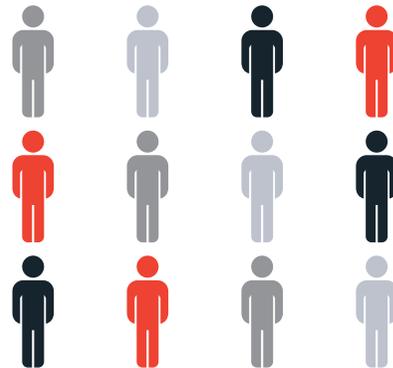
In July 2017, FIRE released a new webpage for the FSN that features over 20 new resources for students interested in promoting free expression and protecting campus rights. You can check it out at thefire.org/student-network.

Last summer, the FSN launched Student Defenders, a project that is aimed at training students around the country to become knowledgeable and dedicated peer advocates who can work one-on-one with fellow students to navigate their school's disciplinary process.

IN APRIL, THE FSN HOSTED 49 STUDENTS AT OUR WEST COAST REGIONAL CONFERENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES.



FIRE WELCOMED 12 UNDERGRADUATE AND LEGAL INTERNS FOR OUR 10-WEEK 2018 INTERNSHIP PROGRAM IN PHILADELPHIA.



28 STUDENTS ATTENDED STUDENT DEFENDERS' FIRST TRAINING CONFERENCE AND 15 CHAPTERS HAVE ALREADY BEEN OR ARE BEING ESTABLISHED AT SCHOOLS AROUND THE COUNTRY.



FIRE received more than **180** applications for our 2018 summer conference.

FIRE received **450** applications for our 2018 undergraduate internship.



CONGRESS SHALL MAKE NO LAW respecting
an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free
exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech,
or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably
to assemble, and to petition the Government for a
redress of grievances.

**THE FIRST AMENDMENT
TO THE U.S. CONSTITUTION**
15 DECEMBER 1791

According to a recent survey, 67 percent of high school students reported that they either didn't know or took for granted the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment. Meanwhile, FIRE is encountering more and more cases involving faculty rights. In order to fight back, we've expanded our outreach to key constituents such as high school students and professors.



Nigel Ashford
speaking with Greg Lukianoff at the
2017 faculty conference

We started a new FIRE Faculty Network, released the first modules of our high school First Amendment curriculum, coordinated an annual essay contest for high school juniors and seniors, launched an online activism portal to allow individuals to contact administrators at the over 450 schools in our Spotlight database, and more.



FIRE'S HIGH SCHOOL OUTREACH
FELLOW ATTENDED AND PRESENTED
AT 10 CONFERENCES THIS PAST YEAR.

FIRE'S new Faculty Network,
launched this spring,
already has nearly
650 members.

FIRE RECEIVED 2,640 SUBMISSIONS
FOR OUR 2017 HIGH SCHOOL ESSAY
CONTEST AND DISTRIBUTED \$20,000
IN COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS TO
OUR FIVE WINNERS.



“Free speech broadens the minds of students, fulfilling education’s most basic purpose. Listening to contrary opinions and engaging in respectful discussions about political or intellectual issues are both valuable opportunities that college students should experience.”

Shelby Tone
2017 high school essay contest winner

FIRE hosted our first ever Faculty Conference in October at the University of North Texas in Dallas. The event featured six papers presented as part of panel discussions and a keynote address from former Northwestern University Professor Alice Dreger. All of the proceedings were published in an online journal on FIRE's website, and two of the papers have already been accepted for publication in academic journals.



Greg Lukianoff
hosting FIRE's first faculty conference

“One of the best conferences I’ve ever attended.”
2017 Faculty Conference Attendee

105 INDIVIDUALS SUBMITTED A PROPOSAL TO PRESENT AT OUR INAUGURAL FACULTY CONFERENCE AND 101 MORE APPLIED TO PRESENT AT OUR UPCOMING 2018 EVENT.



59 FACULTY MEMBERS ATTENDED OUR OCTOBER 2017 FACULTY CONFERENCE.



SINCE ITS LAUNCH IN NOVEMBER, ALMOST 1,000 INDIVIDUALS HAVE USED OUR NEW ONLINE ACTIVISM PORTAL TO CONTACT AN INSTITUTION AND DEMAND CHANGE.





Alice Dreger
keynote speaker at FIRE's 2017 faculty conference

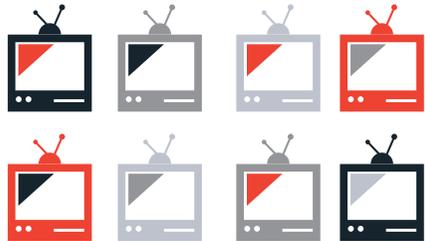
The events of the past year, both on campus and off, have ignited a new debate over the meaning of free speech. Sadly, more and more have begun to view expression through a partisan lens, or as a threat to progress and equality. For example, *The New York Times* questioned whether free speech has been “weaponized,” a leading scholar argued it cannot be progressive, and some argued that it is a threat—not a key—to protecting civil liberties. In light of this, FIRE’s voice is more important than ever.

FIRE WAS MENTIONED IN NEARLY 5,900 NEWS ARTICLES.



FIRE was front and center in some of the biggest free speech stories of the past year, at a time when our perspective was sorely needed. In the aftermath of the tragedy in Charlottesville, we published op-eds in *USA Today* and *Politico*. In response to calls to prohibit speakers such as white nationalist Richard Spencer from campus, we shared our viewpoint in a *New York Times* op-ed. Following the Department of Education’s reversal of the 2011 “Dear Colleague” letter, we appeared on FOX News Channel. All of this shows that FIRE staff members continue to consistently and visibly contribute to the national dialogue surrounding free expression and campus rights.

FIRE STAFF AND REPRESENTATIVES SPOKE ON 33 RADIO BROADCASTS AND MADE 8 TELEVISION APPEARANCES.



FIRE’S WEBSITE ATTRACTED AN AVERAGE OF OVER 100,000 UNIQUE MONTHLY VISITORS.



“What distinguishes liberal societies from illiberal ones is that liberal societies use words, not violence or censorship to settle disputes.”

FIRE’s Greg Lukianoff and Nico Perrino in ‘Politico’

We continue to expand our multimedia efforts. This past year, our “So To Speak” podcast hosted 28 episodes, we launched a new podcast that reviews the history of free speech entitled “Clear and Present Danger,” and our “FIREside Chats” video series provided a new platform for our staff to analyze and candidly discuss FIRE issues.



Adam Steinbaugh, Marieke Tuthill Beck-Coon, and Will Creeley
‘Fireside Chats’

“I haven’t missed an episode and neither should you.”

Praise for “Clear and Present Danger”

“The podcast provides an engaging and inspiring history of free speech . . .”

Praise for “Clear and Present Danger”

FIRE PRODUCED AND DISTRIBUTED
35 VIDEOS.



FIRE’S PODCASTS ATTRACTED NEARLY
130,000 DOWNLOADS.



FIRE’S YOUTUBE CHANNEL HAS OVER
5.5 MILLION VIEWS AND 12,700
SUBSCRIBERS.

5.5 MILLION
VIEWS





Good Beer, e-r-f-1-0-0-0

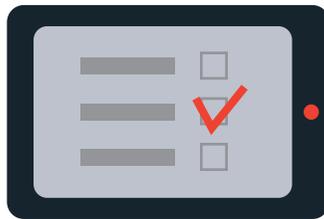
NO SMOKING
IN
BREWHOUSE
THANK YOU #14

Interview at Flying Dog Brewery
So to Speak Podcast

Although 66 percent of Americans believe the academy isn't effectively teaching students about the value of free speech, 53 percent also agree that "colleges have an obligation to protect students from offensive speech and ideas that could create a difficult learning environment." Such societal data exposes the growing creep of campus safety culture into broader society—and a growing reason for FIRE to examine broader issues threatening campus speech.

"Survey: 'Vast Majority' of College Students Demand Due Process"

130 ARTICLES HAVE MENTIONED THE DATA UNCOVERED IN OUR POLLS SO FAR.



"FIRE Survey Shows Most Students Want Due Process Rights Colleges Don't Provide"

"Report Highlights Partisan Divides on Campus Free Speech Issues"

FIRE published two campus opinion surveys last year. The first, released in October, analyzed student perspectives on issues such as self-expression, reactions to expression of other students, guest speakers, and hate speech. The second, published in June, focused on student attitudes towards due process on campus. Both uncovered invaluable data. For example, 30 percent of students have self-censored in class because they thought their words might be considered offensive to their peers and 85 percent of students think their accused classmates should be presumed innocent until proven guilty.



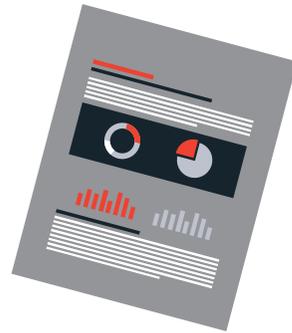
Statistics showing students views on self-censorship
 FIRE's October 2017 survey 'Speaking Freely'

FIRE's polls also uncovered some positive signs. Ninety-three percent of students agree that their school should invite a variety of guest speakers to campus and 98 percent think it is important or very important that students have due process protections in campus judicial proceedings. These opinions represent an opportunity for FIRE and are the building blocks for FIRE's cultural campaign to restore appreciation for expression and campus rights.

FIRE expanded the data available on our Spotlight database with the release of first-of-its-kind ratings of due process protections at America's top 53 colleges and universities. These "Due Process Report Cards" score 10 key provisions for fair procedure according to an A-F grading system.

FIRE's research fellows presented at events for the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, American Political Science Association, and the First Amendment Lawyers Association, published scholarly articles in the *ABA Journal* and the *Notre Dame Journal of Legislation*, and wrote op-eds for outlets such as *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

FIRE RELEASED 5 NEW RESEARCH REPORTS AND RESOURCES.



OUR "DUE PROCESS REPORT CARD" RATINGS WERE MENTIONED IN OVER 115 OUTLETS.



As we enter our 20th year, FIRE is proud to look back on two decades of impact. Despite the challenges before us, we remain focused on advancing our mission and honoring our donors' commitment to campus rights. Together, we have much to celebrate as we mark 20 years of effective and principled advocacy.

REVENUE

Contributions: \$11,427,342
 Investment Income: \$40,834
 Other: \$874,310
TOTAL: \$12,342,486

EXPENSES

Programs: \$6,388,309
 Individual Rights Defense Program: \$341,270
 Policy Reform Program: \$1,096,010
 Litigation Project: \$1,448,287
 FIRE Student Network: \$687,779
 Public Awareness Project: \$1,471,603
 Speech, Outreach, Advocacy, and
 Research Project: \$1,343,360
 Administrative: \$811,066
 Development: \$902,290
TOTAL: \$8,101,665

ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

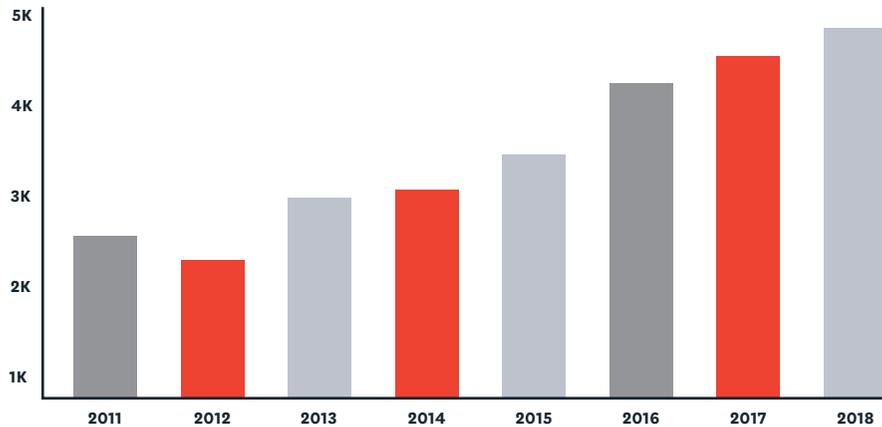
Total Assets: \$16,178,703
 Current Assets: \$14,066,715
 Fixed Assets: \$1,137,168
 Investments: \$841,806
 Other Assets: \$133,014
 Total Liabilities: \$1,245,598
NET ASSETS: \$14,933,105

**Unaudited figures*

NEARLY 3,200 INDIVIDUALS OR ORGANIZATIONS DONATED TO FIRE THIS FISCAL YEAR.

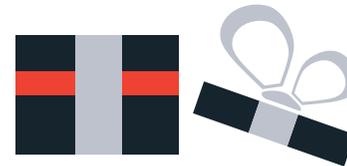


TOTAL DONATIONS TO FIRE

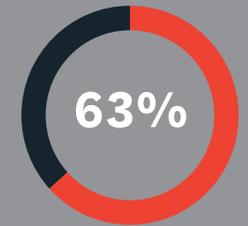


FIRE RECEIVED 60 GIFTS TOTALING ALMOST \$45,000 FROM DONORS WHO CHOSE TO SEND A CONTRIBUTION TO FIRE IN THE PLACE OF A GIFT TO A COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY IN ORDER TO SIGNAL THEIR DISAPPOINTMENT WITH UNIVERSITY POLICIES.

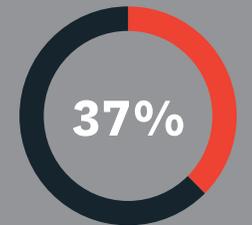
\$45K



WE RAISED \$11.4 MILLION, 63 PERCENT FROM INDIVIDUAL DONORS AND 37 PERCENT FROM FOUNDATION GRANTS.



INDIVIDUAL DONORS



FOUNDATION GRANTS



FIRE

Foundation for Individual
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[YOUTUBE.COM/THEFIREORG](https://www.youtube.com/thefireorg)



[INSTAGRAM.COM/THEFIREORG](https://www.instagram.com/thefireorg)

FIRE's mission is to defend and sustain the individual rights of students and faculty members at America's colleges and universities. These rights include freedom of speech, freedom of association, due process, legal equality, religious liberty, and sanctity of conscience—the essential qualities of liberty. FIRE educates students, faculty, alumni, trustees, and the public about the threats to these rights on our campuses, and provides the means to preserve them.