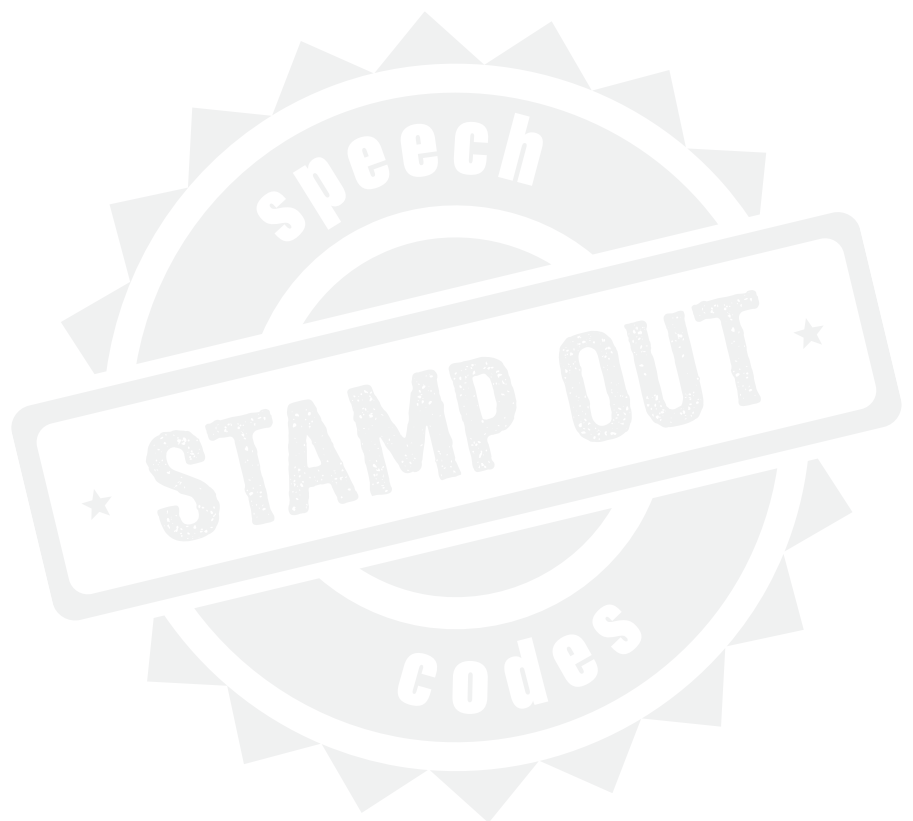


CAMPUS ACTIVISM TOOLKIT
SPRING 2019

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THE CHALLENGE

WE CHALLENGE YOU TO:

- 1** Sign up to take action on campus;
- 2** Read through the toolkit, develop a plan, and schedule a meeting with a FIRE staff member to discuss how we can support your efforts;
- 3** Coordinate one or more of the toolkit's campaign activities with the goal of improving the policies that restrict students' constitutional and/or promised free speech rights on campus, and help to educate your campus community about the importance of free speech to the core purposes of higher education;
- 4** Submit a form on FIRE's website and tell us about your efforts.

THE PRIZES

As a way to honor students who best distinguish themselves through their efforts, we are offering three winners an assortment of incredible prizes. Participants should [submit a form](#) on FIRE’s website to let us know about their work before May 24, 2019. Winners will be announced on June 6.

In order to qualify for a final prize, campaign participants must [update FIRE](#) about their work on campus.

Consider taking photos of events, posting on social media, writing follow-ups after each activity, or documenting your efforts in other ways that you can share with FIRE.

All prizes can be adjusted based on the particular needs and dynamics of your group.



“Stamp Out Speech Codes”
T-shirt(s)
\$1,000 activism grant for a future initiative
Honor at the FIRE Student Network Summer Conference
Feature on FIRE’s Newsdesk
Sponsor of a FIRE speaker to speak at your school
Kit of exclusive FIRE swag
Certificate(s) of Achievement



“Stamp Out Speech Codes”
T-shirt(s)
\$500 activism grant for a future initiative
Honor at the FIRE Student Network Summer Conference
Feature on FIRE’s Newsdesk
Sponsor of a FIRE speaker to speak at your school
Certificate(s) of Achievement



“Stamp Out Speech Codes”
T-shirt(s)
\$250 activism grant for a future initiative
Honor at the FIRE Student Network Summer Conference
Feature on FIRE’s Newsdesk
Certificate(s) of Achievement



THE RUNDOWN

America's colleges and universities ought to be bastions of free expression and the exchange of ideas, but institutional policies at schools across the country severely restrict students' speech. Such policies rob students of their ability to hold a protest, hand out flyers, post on social media, and so much more! Speech-restrictive policies can be found in unlikely places, such as residence hall handbooks and computer use regulations, and are often used to punish students for a wide array of protected speech.

[If your school maintains restrictive policies](#), enforces policies that they don't have on the books, or doesn't live up to its free speech promises—such as those advertised in promotional materials and illustrated in student conduct policies—we need you to bring attention to the issue, and stand up for the rights of all students on campus.

The only way change can happen is for you and your fellow students to speak out. Educate students, faculty, and staff so that they are aware of policies on campus that restrict speech and take action to eliminate or amend them. Ensure that speech-friendly policies are fairly enforced so that all students on campus may enjoy their promised or constitutionally protected free speech rights.

THE SITUATION

WHAT ARE SPEECH CODES?

Speech codes are policies that regulate student expression that is protected under First Amendment standards. Any policy, such as a harassment policy, a protest and demonstration policy, or an information technology (IT) acceptable use policy, can be a speech code if it prohibits protected speech or expression.

Many speech codes impermissibly prohibit speech on the basis of content and/or viewpoint. An example of this type of policy would be a ban on “offensive language” or “disparaging remarks.” Other speech codes are content-neutral, but unreasonably restrict the time, place, and manner of speech. Policies of this type might limit protests and demonstrations to one or two “free speech zones” on campus and/or require students to obtain permission in advance in order to demonstrate on campus.

FIRE uses a traffic light system to rate speech codes at public institutions, as well as those at private institutions that promise their students free speech rights. FIRE gives private colleges and universities that clearly and consistently state that they prioritize other values over free speech an overall “warning” rating.



Policies that earn a “red light” rating both clearly and substantially restrict protected expression, like a ban on “profanity” that applies anywhere on campus.



Policies earn a “yellow light” rating when they are only binding on a more limited amount of protected expression, such as a ban on profanity in the residence halls, or when they, by virtue of vague wording, could too easily be applied to restrict protected expression, like a ban on “abusive” language.




Policies earn a “green light” rating when they do not seriously imperil free speech, such as an institution’s advertised commitment to free speech, or a harassment policy that meets First Amendment standards.

When a college or university restricts access to its policies regulating expression by requiring a password, FIRE awards the college an overall red light rating, as the restriction prevents prospective students from being able to access this crucial information.

WHERE TO FIND SPEECH CODES

Speech codes appear most often in policy materials like student handbooks, codes of conduct, residence hall handbooks, student organization policy handbooks, and online policy libraries that



link to individual policy files. However, policies that regulate expression can also be found on other various parts of a college’s website, like a Title IX website, an IT services website, or a residence hall website. FIRE considers policy language that appears binding on students to be a speech code, whether it appears in a more formal policy document or on another page of the college’s website.

The following are the most common types of policies that include restrictions on freedom of expression:

- Harassment policies, including sexual harassment policies
- Civility policies
- Bias or hate speech reporting policies
- Bullying and cyberbullying policies
- Expressive activity policies, including regulations governing protests, demonstrations, and the distribution of written materials
- Posting policies
- Electronic communications policies
- Restrictions on political speech

FIRE’S SPOTLIGHT DATABASE

If your school is not listed in our database, you can [request](#) to have your school’s policies evaluated.



CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

While there are many ways to show your campus community the importance of letting all voices be heard, there is not a singular “right way” to do it. The campaign actions outlined below are designed to help inspire you to make an impact on campus. Feel free to be creative and tailor these activities to your particular needs, or to come up with something entirely new!

If you need funds to help with your campaign activities, email students@thefire.org with a note detailing how much funding you’ll need and an explanation of how you plan to use these funds. Please be as specific as possible.

- 1 Paper Your Campus
- 2 Write an Op-ed
- 3 Free Speech Zone Stakeout
- 4 Host an Event
- 5 Presentation to Student Senate or Student Governing Body
- 6 Table on Campus

PAPER YOUR CAMPUS

- This is your opportunity to educate your campus community about restrictive speech codes and the importance of free speech to the core purposes of higher education.
- Develop a flyer that cuts to the heart of the issue you would like to address and/or advertises an event where folks can learn more about the issue. Coordinate volunteers and create a plan for hanging flyers around campus, passing them out on the quad, and distributing them while tabling.
- Remember: While universities may place reasonable, viewpoint-neutral “time, place, and manner” regulations on student postings—such as requiring that postings not exceed a certain size or only be posted for a reasonable period of time—they may not grant administrators unfettered discretion to approve or reject student postings. Ideally, posting policies should not require any prior approval, but any policies requiring approval must set forth clear, objective, and content-neutral criteria upon which approval will be granted. If you have concerns about your school’s posting policies, contact FIRE.



WRITE AN OP-ED

- Op-eds are a great way to get the attention of the campus community, including professors, school officials, fellow students, and even alumni. They are also a great way to identify and gain allies. Use an op-ed to let your campus community know how your school's policies fall short and what can be done to work toward creating a culture where free speech is protected and fostered.
- Check out examples [here](#) and [here](#) for how to write your op-ed. Read through FIRE's resource on [how to place an op-ed](#) or letter to the editor in your campus newspaper for more help and inspiration.

FREE SPEECH ZONE STAKEOUT

- Organize a large group of students from across the political spectrum to participate in a demonstration on campus.
- Ask students in attendance to make signs about a cause or issue that they are passionate about. Show your university the many students and groups that want to engage in activism on campus but are prevented from doing so by restrictive speech codes.
- If your school has a free speech zone, work to get as many students as possible to gather there for a protest. [Learn more about free speech zones here.](#)
- If available, make sure to hand out copies of, or provide a link to, your school's [Spotlight](#) rating.

ACTIVISM TIPS: Be sure to read up on your [right to protest on campus](#) before you start planning the event. Advertise the event in advance on social media, through email blasts, by flyering on campus, or whatever way is the most effective method of getting the word out on your campus. Don't forget to reach out to those outside the student body, like professors, who make helpful allies and may want to take part in the event.

HOST AN EVENT

- Educate your campus community about the importance of free speech by hosting an event with an expert from FIRE.
- Invite a member of [FIRE's staff](#) to your campus to discuss the importance of free speech and to highlight the issues with your school's speech codes. Plan for a single speaker, a debate, or even a panel of community members to discuss the issue together.


- Need help covering the costs? Ask us about FIRE grants or consider hosting the speaker via Skype.

ACTIVISM TIPS: Reach out to a diverse range of student groups on campus and ask if they would be willing to co-sponsor, join, or help promote the event. Advertise the event well in advance. In busy areas of campus, start conversations with those who pass by. Have handbills or flyers ready so that you can quickly and effectively disseminate information and advertise future events. Collect the email addresses and names of those who show interest in the event, the cause, or working with you in the future. Before the event, send out an event reminder, and after the event follow up on further opportunities to collaborate.

PRESENTATION TO STUDENT SENATE OR STUDENT GOVERNING BODY

- Educate the Student Senate or student governing body at your school about the importance of free speech rights on campus.
- If you go to a public institution, explain how the university has a legal obligation to uphold the First Amendment.
- If you attend a private institution and your institution promises students freedom of expression, explain how your university might not be living up to its promises.
- Whether you attend a public or private university, you can:
 - Educate your school's student governing body about the "[Chicago Statement](#)" and the important protections that it offers;
 - Ask the student governing body to pass a resolution calling for a change in policies that violate free speech rights on campus;
 - Discuss the important role that free speech plays in higher education;
 - Explain how policies that breach student rights harm the academic environment by undermining the process of truth discovery that provides the foundation for a free, educated, and open society; and/or
 - Articulate the nature of the offending policies and how they fall short.

Reach out to FIRE for [expert advice](#) on how your school's policies can be improved to protect student rights.



ACTIVISM TIPS: If you propose a resolution, share it throughout the campus community via email, social media, tabling on campus, and word of mouth. Build a coalition of students representing a cross section of the campus community. Request to have hearings and panel discussions in an effort to influence the administration. Work to develop a rapport with at least one member of the Student Senate or student governing body. Be open and willing to work with the Student Senate to help write and propose revisions, repeals, and updates to the administration. Make your work visible by publishing articles in the campus newspaper detailing your initiative.

TABLE ON CAMPUS

- Have 1–2 volunteers stationed at a table with information about your school’s speech codes. Include a call to action for students who stop by your table. If your school is rated in FIRE’s Spotlight Database, you could have a computer on the table that students can use to fill out the Take Action form on your university’s Spotlight page, asking the administration for policy reform. Alternatively, you can have students and faculty sign a petition written by you or write postcards asking your school’s administration to reform its speech codes.
- Make sure you know your school’s policies regarding tabling on campus. If you have any questions about your school’s tabling policies, reach out to FIRE.

TIPS AND RESOURCES

FIRE STUDENT NETWORK RESOURCES

[Working with Administrators](#)

[Tips for Effective Tabling](#)

[How to Build Coalitions on Campus](#)

[Do's and Don'ts of Activism](#)

[Using Social Media to Bolster Your Activism](#)

FIRE RESOURCES ON SPEECH CODES AND POLICY REFORM

[FIRE's Spotlight Database](#)

[Guide to Using the Spotlight Database](#)

[Speech Code Reports](#)

[Speech Code Information Request Form](#)

[FIRE's Guide to Free Speech on Campus](#)

[State of the Law: Speech Codes](#)

[Correcting Common Mistakes in Campus Speech](#)

[Policies](#)



GRAPHICS AND TOOLS

DOWNLOAD THE GRAPHICS AND SOCIAL MEDIA KIT

Use these graphics to promote and enhance your “Stamp Out Speech Codes” initiatives on campus.

TWITTER



Shareable Graphic 900x450px



Cover Photo 1500x500px



Profile Photo 400x400px

FACEBOOK



Cover Photo 851x315px



Profile Photo 170x170px

INSTAGRAM



Graphic 1080x1080px

THE RULES

This contest is sponsored by the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE). Contest entrants must be undergraduate or graduate students at colleges or universities in the United States.

The contest will launch on March 27 and ends at 11:59pm (ET) on May 24 (the “Contest Period”). To be eligible for the prizes, you must perform each of the following steps within the Contest Period.

- 1 [Sign up](#) for the **Stamp Out Speech Codes** Activism Toolkit.
- 2 Engage in free speech-related activism on campus in furtherance of the Stamp Out Speech Codes Campaign.
- 3 [Report your results](#) to FIRE.

All contest entries will be evaluated by a panel of judges with expertise in free speech and campus activism. Initiatives must work toward amending restrictive speech codes on campus.

In awarding prizes, the following criteria may be taken into account.

- The number of campaign actions completed.
- The impact made on campus and in the larger community.
- Creativity in the execution of the campaign.
- Work with diverse coalitions.

GOOD LUCK!

If you have any questions or need advice, don't hesitate to reach out to FSN staff.

Let us know how your campaign is going along the way! Feel free to keep us in the loop over email, and by tagging us in your Twitter and Instagram posts.

