



February 18, 2022

SENT BY ELECTRONIC MAIL TO:

[annemarie.tamburro@thefire.org](mailto:annemarie.tamburro@thefire.org)

Anne Marie Tamburro  
Program Officer, Individual Rights Defense Program  
Foundation for Individual Rights in Education

Re: Student Media Parking for Basketball Games

Dear Ms. Tamburro,

Thank you for your letter dated February 2, 2022, regarding the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education's ("FIRE") concern with Wichita State University's ("WSU" or the "University") alleged differential treatment of student journalists and non-student journalists when issuing media parking passes at sporting events. WSU is committed to preserving and supporting freedom of thought, speech, and expression on our campus and does not discriminate against press entities based on the content of or viewpoint espoused by the publication's coverage. We appreciate and fully support the rights afforded to all members of the press including, but not limited to The Sunflower. While we deny any differential treatment of The Sunflower or our student journalists, WSU is committed to making modifications to its existing parking pass policy for sporting events beginning with the 2022-2023 season.

By way of background, credentialed media outlets are allotted at least one (1) parking pass per season in one (or more) of three parking lots. The lot closest to Charles Koch Arena ("Koch Arena"), where WSU's home men's and women's basketball games are played, contains only eleven (11) spots (the "Closer G Lot"). The next closest lot (the "Farther G Lot") contains eight (8) spots. The furthest lot (the "BG Lot") is by far the biggest and, depending on arrival time, can wind up being closer to Koch Arena than the Farther G Lot.

Currently, passes in the Closer G Lot and the Farther G Lot are distributed to table crew and public address announcers, radio announcers, ESPN announcers, the stat crew, the Wichita Eagle (the state's largest newspaper), and the three major local television stations. Parking passes for the closer lots are distributed on a non-discriminatory reasonable basis utilizing a variety of factors (e.g., job function (members of the television media have a large amount of equipment to carry to and from the lot to Koch Arena), circulation / viewership, commitment to covering WSU's athletic teams on a day-to-day basis, and seniority). The Sunflower receives two (2) parking passes in the BG Lot.

Again, while we do not believe our current practice to be discriminatory, beginning with the 2022-2023 season, to demonstrate our continued commitment to The Sunflower and in recognition of its important and meaningful coverage of our men's and women's basketball

teams, WSU will continue to provide The Sunflower with two (2) parking passes, one (1) parking pass in the Closer G Lot and one (1) parking pass in the BG Lot.

Additionally, our athletics department will be contacting Ms. Boese regarding her current parking concerns and will offer her use of one (1) of the single-game parking spots normally reserved for visiting teams, national media, and professional scouts for the remainder of the 2021-2022 season. This spot is in the Closer G Lot. This parking pass is being provided directly to Ms. Boese and is in addition to two (2) spots provided to The Sunflower.

The University appreciates you bringing this issue to our attention and again reiterates its commitment to preserving and supporting freedom of thought, speech, and expression on our campus. Should you need any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at (316) 978-67911.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joseph A. Dempewolf". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "J".

Joseph A. Dempewolf  
Assistant General Counsel