



March 3, 2026

William M. Downs
President's Office
Campbell University
P.O. Box 127
Buies Creek, North Carolina 27506

Sent via U.S. Mail and Electronic Mail (president@campbell.edu)

Dear President Downs:

FIRE, a nonpartisan nonprofit dedicated to defending free speech,¹ is concerned by Campbell University's viewpoint-discriminatory enforcement of an overbroad publication removal policy against student Justin Booker.² Booker's flyer was unquestionably protected by Campbell's strong and laudable free expression promises, which bar the university from enforcing its policies against expression based on the speaker's viewpoint. We urge Campbell to uphold these commitments, remove the restriction on Booker's flyers, and repeal its publication removal policy.

On September 11, 2025, Campbell law student Justin Booker posted flyers throughout the law school that read, "End Political Violence" and featured a photo of Charlie Kirk and his wife holding their two small children.³ Booker posted several of his flyers on columns and in hallways where they were surrounded by other postings, including flyers advertising political events and commercial products.⁴ On September 12, Regina Chavis, Assistant Dean of Student Life, Pro Bono Opportunities, and Belonging, ordered Booker not to continue placing copies of the flyer anywhere within the law school, citing school policy.⁵ When Booker asked Chavis where he could find that policy,⁶ Chavis directed him to the Student Organization Handbook's

¹ For more than 25 years, FIRE has defended free expression and other individual rights on America's university campuses. You can learn more about our mission and activities at fire.org.

² The recitation of facts here reflects our understanding of the pertinent information. We appreciate that you may have additional information to offer and invite you to share it with us. To these ends, please find enclosed an executed privacy waiver authorizing you to share information about this matter.

³ Record on Appeal from Justin Booker, student, to J. Rich Leonard, Dean, School of Law, 28–30 (on file with author).

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Email from Regina Chavis, Assistant Dean, to Booker (Sep. 12, 2025, 11:26 AM) (on file with author).

⁶ Email from Booker to Chavis (Sep. 12, 2025, 11:28 AM) (on file with author).

Publicity and Communication provision on bulletin boards, which limits posting to designated bulletin boards and bars posting anywhere else within the law school.⁷ The handbook also grants Chavis the authority to remove any student publication for any reason.⁸ Yet while Booker’s flyers were removed, other flyers that did not reference Kirk were not taken down.⁹ Booker photographed the places where his flyers were hung to show that the other flyers had not been removed.

Campbell’s viewpoint-discriminatory flyer removal violates its free speech promises.¹⁰ The university says it is “committed to free and open inquiry in all matters, ensuring that all members of the Law School community have the broadest possible latitude to speak, write, listen, challenge, and learn,” and that “students ... have the right to express their opinion.”¹¹ These laudable commitments do not prevent Campbell from establishing “reasonable restrictions on the time, place or manner” of speech and expressive activity.¹² To be meaningful, however, restrictions placed on student expression on campus must be viewpoint- and content-neutral, narrowly tailored to serve a significant institutional interest, and leave open ample alternative channels for communication.¹³ Campbell’s policy prohibiting the placement of flyers outside of bulletin boards appears, on paper, to satisfy this standard.¹⁴ But the law school breaks its commitment to student expression when it selectively enforces this policy by targeting *only* Booker’s flyers because of their viewpoint.

The removal of Booker’s flyers urging an end to political violence while allowing similarly sized and positioned flyers to remain is viewpoint-based. When authorities target “not subject matter but particular views taken by speakers on a subject, the violation [of expressive rights] is all the more blatant.”¹⁵ Viewpoint discrimination is “an egregious form” of censorship, and authorities “must abstain from regulating speech when the specific motivating ideology or the opinion or perspective of the speaker is the rationale for the restriction.”¹⁶ If Campbell is refraining from removing *some* students’ flyers posted outside of designated bulletin boards, it must refrain from removing *all* similarly displayed flyers, or be prepared to explain to a

⁷ Email from Chavis to Booker (Sept 12, 2025, 1:44 PM) (on file with author); *see also Student Organization Handbook*, Publicity and Communication, CAMPBELL UNIV. (on file with author).

⁸ The handbook provides a non-exhaustive list of rationales for removing postings before saying the Dean of Student Life and Pro Bono Opportunities can remove postings “at his or her discretion.” *Student Organization Handbook*, at Removal of a Student Organization’s Publications.

⁹ Record on Appeal, *supra* note 3 at 30

¹⁰ While Campbell is a private institution not bound by the First Amendment, courts’ interpretation of the First Amendment provides a reasonable baseline for interpreting what the college’s robust free expression promises mean in practice.

¹¹ *See Commitment to Open Comment, Dialogue, and Debate*, Freedom of Expression, CAMPBELL UNIV., 1 (Apr. 11, 2025) <https://assets.campbell.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2025/05/FacultyStatement-FreeExpression-1-1.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/CLZ6-EC57>].

¹² *Ward v. Rock Against Racism*, 491 U.S. 781, 791 (1989).

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ *Student Organization Handbook*, *supra* note 7 at Publicity and Communication.

¹⁵ *Rosenberger v. Rector & Visitors of the Univ. of Va.*, 515 U.S. 819, 829 (1995).

¹⁶ *Id.*; *see also Perry Educ. Ass’n v. Perry Local Educators’ Ass’n*, 460 U.S. 37, 62 (1983) (Brennan J., dissenting) (“Viewpoint discrimination is censorship in its purest form.”).

community of law students and legal faculty why rules of purportedly general application actually apply only to those with disfavored viewpoints. Preferably, the university could further support a culture of free expression by allowing *all* such displays to remain up and formally expanding the number of areas for expression. This should not be overly difficult since, at least for some of its constituents, this expanded area for expression is already a reality.

Campbell's Student Organization handbook invites this viewpoint discrimination and the resulting chill by granting an administrator unbridled discretion to remove any posting for any reason.¹⁷ Would a flyer concerning voting rights be taken down by administrators? What about a poster encouraging vaccination? Campbell's policy guarantees organizations cannot know what flyers may or may not be removed. This uncertainty impermissibly chills expression, violating Campbell's free speech commitments, and inviting further specific violations of their rights, as in Booker's case.¹⁸

No matter how it proceeds, Campbell must clarify that it will not continue to enforce its speech-related policies in a viewpoint-discriminatory manner.

We request a substantive response to this letter no later than the close of business on Tuesday, March 17, 2026, making it publicly clear that the college will enforce all speech policies in a viewpoint-neutral manner, remove the ban on Booker's flyers, and rectify the vagueness of its student organization posting policy.

Sincerely,

Dominic Coletti
Program Officer, Campus Rights Advocacy

Cc: J. Rich Leonard, Dean, Campbell Law School
Regina Chavis, Assistant Dean of Student Life, Pro Bono Opportunities, and Belonging

Encl.

¹⁷ *Student Organization Handbook*, *supra* note 7.

¹⁸ *See, e.g., Rosenberger*, 515 U.S. at 829 (1995) (viewpoint discrimination is "an egregious form" of censorship antithetical to the First Amendment and a grave affront to students' First Amendment rights) (citing *Perry*, 460 U.S. at 46); *Grayned v. City of Rockford*, 408 U.S. 104, 108–09 (1972) (to comport with free speech principles, university regulations must "give the person of ordinary intelligence a reasonable opportunity to know what is prohibited, so that [they] may act accordingly").