



April 10, 2026

VIA OVERNIGHT AND ELETRONIC DELIVERY (marie.mcmullan@fire.org)

Marie McMullan
Student Press Counsel, Campus Rights Advocacy
The Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression
510 Walnut Street, Suite 900
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Dear Marie:

Thank you for your April 9, 2026 letter sharing concerns about the way in which The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill responded to recent incidents of free expression by *The Daily Tar Heel* and by the Hill After Hours student organization. We have enjoyed a collaborative working relationship with FIRE over many years, and we are proud of the “green light” rating we have earned from FIRE for our free speech policies.

Carolina is committed to upholding the First Amendment rights of our students and our student groups to engage in free expression. This is true even when, as here, we believe those instances of expression may be deeply offensive to members of our campus community and are misaligned with the University’s efforts to nurture an environment where students feel welcome and can thrive. The University is also committed to institutional neutrality as embodied in UNC System policy instructing constituent schools to remain neutral regarding any “view of social policy” or “on the political controversies of the day.”

Please be assured that we are not investigating any student or student group for the articles that appeared in the April 1, 2026 edition of *The Daily Tar Heel* or the recent Hill After Hours video. Student Affairs staff did invite members of *The Daily Tar Heel* to meet, but the focus of that conversation was on providing support and resources responsive to feedback and threats the students had received. During these voluntary conversations, we reiterated that we uphold the free expression rights of all students and support them when they face pushback related to the exercise of those rights, even when the University does not endorse their message.

Our prior statement was in no way intended to chill the free expression rights of our campus community. We will continue to take proactive steps, including a review of our websites, to assure that all students and student groups understand that we support their First Amendment rights and that they can freely express those rights unburdened by the University.

Once again, we appreciate FIRE’s outreach and hope that this letter fully satisfies FIRE’s concerns.

Very truly yours,

Kara E. Simmons
Senior Associate Vice Chancellor and Deputy General Counsel