

Campus Deplatforming Database: Methodology

Introduction

Since our founding in 1999, the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression has fought the culture of censorship on college and university campuses. One prominent aspect of campus censorship culture is *deplatforming* — the successful censorship of, or the attempt to censor, campus events open to the public. Deplatforming can include disinviting speakers, canceling performances, taking down art exhibits, or preventing the showing of a film. It can include censorship or attempts at censorship that occurred either before or during an event, but not those that occurred after an event (e.g., a student club’s right to invite speakers is revoked because of something said at the event).

What the campus deplatforming database records

The [Campus Deplatforming database](#) documents incidents where attempts were made to censor or block public events on college campuses.¹ For each incident, the database records:

- **Year** of the deplatforming attempt
- **School** involved and its classification (public, private, religious, or community college)
- **Topic(s)** that sparked the controversy (e.g., Israeli-Palestinian conflict, race, religion)
- **Source(s)** of the attempt (e.g., students, faculty, administrators, politicians)
- **Petitions** circulated for or against the expression
- **Political direction** of the attempt (from the left or right of the speaker)
- **Outcome** of the attempt (e.g., disinvited, canceled, disrupted)
- **Public response** from the institution, if any

It is important to note that this research is not exhaustive. It would be nearly impossible to compile information on every attempt to deplatform invited expression that occurs on hundreds of college and university campuses across the country. However, FIRE is confident that this data accurately documents a culture of censorship.

¹ The Campus Deplatforming database was originally known as the Campus Disinvitation database. This original database only recorded attempts to disinvite speakers from speaking at campus events. FIRE announced the expanded Campus Deplatforming database on February 8, 2024, and detailed how the expanded database now includes records of attempts to cancel performances (e.g., comedy shows, plays), art exhibits, or film screenings, in addition to speaker disinvitation attempts. For a full explanation see: Stevens, S. (February 8, 2024). Introducing FIRE’s Campus Deplatforming Database: Campus Disinvitation Database expanded to include attempts to cancel performances, art exhibits, and film screenings. Available online: <https://www.fire.org/news/introducing-fires-campus-deplatforming-database>.

Furthermore, the Campus Deplatforming Database relies on publicly available information from local and national media outlets, campus newspapers, social media, petitions, lawsuits, and other publicly available materials. As a general rule, this database requires credible evidence of an attempt to investigate, censor, or otherwise deplatform invited expression that is — or would at a public college or university be — protected by the First Amendment. Incidents are evaluated on a case by case basis and reviewed by at least one attorney from FIRE’s Campus Rights Advocacy team and at least two members of FIRE’s Research Department. Not every entry involves FIRE’s advocacy work. Once an incident has been reviewed and approved for inclusion, it is then coded by FIRE’s Research Department. What is coded about each incident is described in more detail below.

Detailed methodology

What is a deplatforming attempt?

A deplatforming attempt is an effort to **prevent** public expression on campus, going beyond protest or disagreement. These include:

- Disinviting invited speakers
- Canceling performances or screenings
- Removing or altering public artwork
- Disrupting events in progress

Deplatforming attempts do not include:

- Peaceful protests or criticisms that do **not** aim to shut down the event
- Administrative decisions to cancel or modify events **not** aimed at silencing a particular speaker or expression (e.g., logistics-related changes)
- Decisions by a college or university to cancel or alter its commencement ceremony when this decision is made because of concerns that the ceremony will be disrupted by protesters whose target is the college or university itself and not the commencement speakers

Outcomes of deplatforming attempts

Deplatforming attempts are classified as **successful** or **unsuccessful**, based on whether the targeted event was stopped or significantly altered.

Unsuccessful attempts

Unsuccessful deplatforming attempts recorded in the Campus Deplatforming database include: **cancellation attempts, disinvitation attempts, and attempted disruptions.**

A **cancellation attempt** occurs when a deplatforming attempt targeting a comedic musical, or play performance, a movie screening, or an art display or exhibit fails, and the event proceeds as planned. For example, cancellation attempts recorded in the Campus Deplatforming database include attempts by activist religious organizations to pressure colleges and universities to forbid performances of [*The Vagina Monologues*](#) on campus, claiming "the play's emphasis on genital anatomy and sexual activity, including lesbian encounters and masturbation, degrades women and fails to appreciate their true dignity and vocation."

A **disinvitation attempt** occurs when a deplatforming attempt targeting a **speaker** invited to speak on campus fails in getting that speaker's invitation rescinded. Examples of disinvitation attempts recorded in the Campus Deplatforming database include demands by activist religious organizations and their supporters to rescind invitations to on-campus speakers because of their views on abortion or gay rights, attempts by on- and/or off-campus sources to prevent sitting U.S. presidents (e.g., [George W. Bush](#), [Barack Obama](#)) from delivering commencement addresses, and many occasions where administrators refused the demands of students and student organizations to rescind the invitation of a politically controversial speaker — like conservative media personality [Ben Shapiro](#) or leftwing activist [Angela Davis](#) — to an on-campus event.

An **attempted disruption** occurs when a deplatforming attempt interrupts an event in progress but fails to stop it. Examples of attempted disruptions include attempts to shout the speaker down, throwing pieces of fruit or pie at a speaker, attempting to storm the stage, or temporarily blocking the audience's view of the speaker. All of these actions can temporarily disrupt a speech, but if they do not prevent the speaker from completing their remarks, they are coded as an attempted disruption. Attempted disruptions also include incidents when people who are not attending the speech attempt to prevent others from doing so, make loud noises right outside the event space, or even pull fire alarms to temporarily drown out the speaker.

Successful deplatforming attempts

Successful deplatforming attempts recorded in the Campus Deplatforming database are recorded as: **canceled, postponed, withdrew, rejected, removed, revoked, or substantial event disruption.**

Two of these seven are used to describe successful deplatforming attempts that target a musician or play performance, a movie screening, or artwork.

The term **canceled** describes a successful deplatforming attempt that prevents a musical or play performance or a movie screening from occurring. For example, the president of West Texas A&M University [canceled](#) a student group's charity drag show in 2023 because of his personal religious beliefs, calling drag shows "derisive, divisive and demoralizing misogyny."

The term **removed** describes a successful deplatforming attempt where artwork is [pulled](#) from public display. For example, in 2011 at Gainesville State College, a faculty member contributed a painting to the Faculty Biennial Exhibition depicting torch-wielding Ku Klux Klan members and a lynching superimposed onto an image of the Confederate flag. Following public criticism of the painting, the university president removed it without notifying the faculty member or the art gallery director.

The four kinds of successful deplatforming attempts target a speaker invited to campus.

The term **postponed** describes a successful deplatforming attempt where an event is postponed, possibly indefinitely. For example, in 2019 at the University of Connecticut School of Law, student organizers claimed that the university president forced the law school's dean to postpone pro-Palestinian activist [Linda Sarsour's](#) speech when a second speaker, who was to counterbalance Sarsour's views, was not available. Sarsour's talk was rescheduled without a second speaker.

The term **rejected** describes deplatforming attempts that succeed because the university fails to approve a request to invite a speaker. Examples of rejected speakers include administrators at the Catholic University of America telling organizers of a film and music festival that it would not host a panel for the event on-campus if [Stanley Tucci](#) was one of the panelists because of his pro-choice views.

The term **revoked** describes a deplatforming attempt that results in the revocation of a speaker's invitation to speak on campus. For example, the president of Creighton University rescinded its invitation of [Anne Lamott](#) to deliver a commencement speech in 2007 because of Lamott's support for assisted suicide.

The term **withdrew** describes deplatforming attempts that succeed in getting a speaker to voluntarily not attend an event. In 2009, for example, [Ben Stein](#) withdrew from delivering a commencement speech at the University of Vermont after the university received complaints from "persons both internal and external to the university" about Stein's opposition to the theory of evolution.

Finally, the term **substantial event disruption** is applied to a variety of outcomes:

1. When a student government and/or administrators make it exceedingly difficult for event organizers to hold the event (e.g., by moving the event to a smaller location that is difficult to find). For example, in 2023 at [Washington and Lee University](#), multiple student organizations, including the College Democrats and the College Republicans, encountered bureaucratic roadblocks that hindered their ability to secure a venue for a panel discussion featuring multiple speakers. The event ultimately proceeded, but took place in a smaller venue than was originally planned.

2. When someone alters or covers a piece of artwork without the artist's consent. For instance, in 2025 administrators at Pepperdine University directed the staff at the Frederick R. Weisman Museum of Art on campus to [alter](#) an art installation on display. Museum staff followed this directive and hid a fabric patch that had "SAVE THE CHILDREN" and "ABOLISH ICE" embroidered on it. Administrators also asked museum staff to remove a sign on the wall that encouraged interaction with the piece to ensure the patch remained out of sight.
3. When a heckler's veto occurs — meaning one or more people substantially disrupt or entirely prevent a speaker from finishing their remarks. For example, during the 2002 commencement ceremony at the Sacramento campus of California State University, hecklers booed [Janis Besler Heaphy](#) into silence after she began her remarks during a commencement speech about the September 11 attacks, preventing Heaphy from finishing her speech.

Reinvitations

For all successful deplatforming attempts we also record if the speaker was **reinvited** to campus at a later date. For instance, a University of Mississippi professor canceled a campus speech by [Elisha Krauss](#) in 2019 by claiming that the event space booked was not open to partisan or ideological student organizations. The university provost reversed this decision, and the event was held.

Another example occurred at the University of Wyoming in 2010, when administrators revoked a speaking invitation to [William Ayers](#) due to his radical and militant past with the Weather Underground. Ayers sued the university, won, and subsequently appeared on campus.

The outcome of both of these incidents is coded as **revoked**, but each entry also notes that Krauss and Ayers were reinvited and successfully spoke on campus at a later date.

Characteristics of deplatforming attempts

Sources of deplatforming attempts

Deplatforming attempts can be initiated by on-campus sources, off-campus sources, or a combination of both. On-campus sources include administrators, faculty, stakeholders, parents of current students, student groups, and students (graduate and undergraduate). Off-campus sources include activists or activist groups, alumni, corporations, members of the general public, politicians, and public figures (e.g., religious leaders). Attempts can also be made by anonymous or unknown sources. The sources of a deplatforming attempt can overlap, meaning that there can be more than one source. Table 1 provides more specific descriptions of each source.

Table 1. Sources of deplatforming attempts.

<u>Source of disinvitation attempt</u>	<u>Description of source</u>	<u>Is the source on-campus or off-campus?</u>
Activist(s)	External activist organizations or groups	Off-campus
Administrator(s)	University officials	On-campus
Alumni	Graduates or alumni groups	Off-campus
Anonymous	Source unknown	Not applicable
Corporation(s)	Businesses or corporations (e.g., Zoom)	Off-campus
Faculty	Academic departments or individual faculty	On-campus
General Public	Community members not affiliated with school	Off-campus
Politician(s)	Elected or formerly elected officials, political appointees	Off-campus
Public Figure	Religious or non-elected public figures	Off-campus
Stakeholder(s)/Parent(s)	Donors, trustees, or parents of students	On-campus
Student Group(s)	Student groups or organizations	On-campus
Students	Individual students	On-campus
Unknown	Cannot identify source	Not applicable

An on-campus deplatforming attempt may involve students and student organizations protesting a speaker's upcoming appearance or even formally petitioning the school administration to disinvite a speaker from campus. In 2022, for instance, students at the University of Minnesota petitioned the administration to disinvite Palestinian activist [Mohammed El-Kurd](#) from campus over alleged anti-Semitism. It could also involve students and faculty calling for a speaker's disinvitation, like they did in 2003 at St. Joseph's University when they petitioned the school administration to rescind a commencement invitation to [Rick Santorum](#) because of his comments about homosexuality.

An off-campus deplatforming attempt may involve activist organizations, politicians, or local religious leaders pressuring a school administration to disinvite a speaker from campus or cancel an on-campus performance. For instance, an official from the New York Chinese consulate asked Smith College in 2007 to cancel a talk by the [Dalai Lama](#). They can also involve an activist organization petitioning the school’s administration to disinvite “inappropriate speakers” because they are pro-choice or support gay rights, for example. And they can even involve members of the general public or local community petitioning the college or university to disinvite speakers they dislike from coming to campus.

A deplatforming attempt can also come from both on- and off-campus sources. Sometimes these efforts may be coordinated — such as a combination of students, faculty, or trustees with some combination of activists, politicians, public figures, or members of the general public. For instance, in 2021, activists, alumni, members of the general public, university stakeholders, and students all pressured the University of Notre Dame to disinvite [President Joe Biden](#) from commencement because they considered his views on abortion, gay rights, biological sex, and religious liberty divergent from the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Other times, on- and off-campus sources may not coordinate their efforts. For example, in 2007 [then-President George W. Bush](#) was invited to give a commencement speech at Saint Vincent College. Faculty members petitioned the university to rescind its invitation to Bush, claiming the Iraq War runs afoul of Catholic teachings and because Bush’s policies “protect the privileges of rich and powerful Americans.” Independent of this petition, a former president of the college authored an op-ed titled, “Mr. President, this place is not your place,” opposing Bush’s invitation. Bush spoke successfully.

Type of school

Five different kinds of colleges and universities can be found in the Campus Deplatforming database. Table 2 lists how each type of school is coded and provides a definition and an example for each type of school.

Table 2. Types of schools

<u>Type of school</u>	<u>Definition</u>	<u>Example</u>
Community college	A two-year community or county college	Hudson Community College
Federal Service Academy	One of the five federal service academies	United States Naval Academy
Public	A four-year state college or university	University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)

Private	A four-year private, secular college or university	Harvard University
Religious	A four-year religious college or university	University of Notre Dame

Public, private, and religious schools may or may not have graduate programs.

Form of expression

Deplatforming attempts on campus are a year-round phenomenon, targeting different forms of expression. Table 3 lists the forms of expression that are recorded in the Campus Deplatforming Database, defines each form, and offers specific examples for each form of expression.

Table 3. Forms of expression

<u>Form of expression</u>	<u>Includes</u>	<u>Example</u>
Artwork	Murals, paintings, sculptures, and art installations	A painting titled <i>Voices of Palestine</i> .
Campus speech	Talks, debates, or panel discussions	A panel discussion on civil liberties featuring Amy Wax and Keith Whittington.
Cinema	Film screenings	A screening of the movie <i>American Sniper</i> .
Commencement speech	Speeches made during a commencement or graduation ceremony	A commencement speech by the Dalai Lama.
Other	Miscellaneous events tied to on-campus issues	Students disrupting a morning press conference off-campus, because it features a controversial speaker scheduled to appear on campus that evening.
Performance	Plays, concerts, recitals, or comedy shows	A performance of the play <i>The Vagina Monologues</i> .

Topic(s) of controversy

Deplatforming attempts usually occur because the expression involves something politically controversial. Many of the speakers identified as “inappropriate” by the [Cardinal Newman Society](#)

are labeled this way because they are pro-choice. The topic of controversy for this kind of deplatforming attempt would be **abortion**. Other times, a speaker faces a deplatforming attempt for a litany of controversial views or statements. For instance, opposition to a [Milo Yiannopoulos](#) appearance on campus often emphasizes his “far-right, racist, misogynistic, Islamophobic, transphobic views.” The topics of controversy for this kind of disinvitation attempt would be coded as **gender, political views, race, and religion**.

Table 4 lists all the controversial topics coded in the Campus Deplatforming database and what kinds of expression that topic includes (e.g., **environment** includes views on climate change and environmental policy).

Table 4. Topics of controversy

<u>Controversy topic</u>	<u>Expression includes</u>
Abortion	Views on abortion, including partial-birth abortion, the morning after pill, Plan B, and abortifacients
Animal rights	Views on animal rights/animal cruelty
Civil liberties	Views on civil liberties (e.g., freedom of speech, right to bear arms, same-sex marriage, death penalty)
Class or policy issues	Views on class (e.g., poverty) or policy issues (e.g., education, funding, tax rates)
Criminal or other misconduct	Criminal misconduct (e.g., convicted of a crime) or other forms of misconduct (e.g., plagiarism, accusations of sexual harassment)
Elections	Views on previous elections, upcoming elections, voting rights laws, or democracy and democratic institutions
Environment	Views on climate change and environmental policy
Foreign affairs	Views on foreign affairs or events in other countries (e.g., Brexit, the Iraq War, human rights violations)
Gender	Views on gender, gender roles, feminism, sexual assault/#MeToo, Title IX, or transgender rights; Accusations of misogyny, sexism or transphobia
Health	Views on healthcare issues (e.g., COVID-19 vaccines), healthcare policy, the disabled, or mental health
Immigration	Views on immigration, immigration policy, or immigrants

Israeli-Palestinian conflict	Views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict
Judiciary system	Views about the judiciary system, court decisions, or members of the judiciary (e.g., Supreme Court Justices)
Political views	General views on political issues (e.g., speaker is an outspoken liberal or conservative); partisan animosity (e.g., “The speaker is a right-wing extremist”); decisions that appear to lack viewpoint neutrality (e.g., denying funding for an event)
Police	Views on policing, police misconduct, or murder of police
Race	Views on racial issues (e.g., affirmative action, DEI efforts) or racial differences; Accusations of racism, antisemitism, etc.
Religion	Views on religion or religious differences; Accusations of religious prejudice (e.g., “Islamophobia”)
Scientific views	Views on controversial scientific research or work that supports controversial positions (e.g., climate change skepticism, genes and I.Q. differences)
Sexuality	Views on sexual orientation or gay rights; Accusations of homophobia
Terrorism	Views on terrorism, individual terrorist attacks, or the War on Terror; has previously engaged in terrorism; Close association with known terrorists
Other	Views on issues that do not fall into one of the above categories (e.g., “The speaker was not prestigious enough”)

Petitions

Some deplatforming attempts are accompanied by one or more formal petitions with multiple signatories. A petition can be delivered directly to the college or university president or created online at a website like Change.org. Deplatforming attempts also spur petitions that advocate for a speaker’s right to express themselves and, like their counterparts calling for a college or university to rescind a speaker’s invitation to campus, these petitions are either delivered directly to the college or university president or created online at a website. The Campus Deplatforming database records both kinds of petitions, labeling them either **petition against** or **petition for**.

To warrant inclusion in the database, a petition opposing or supporting a speaker must meet at least one of the following criteria:

1. The letter, petition, email, Facebook page, (or other communication) addressed to the university or college administration or other body with authority over the educational institution must have **10 or more** signatories/participants opposing the event or speaker.
2. The letter, petition, or email (or other communication) addressed to the university or college administration or other body with authority over the educational institution by faculty be signed by **one or more** signatories.
3. The letter, petition, or email (or other communication) addressed to the university or college administration or other body with authority over the educational institution must be signed by **one or more** student clubs or organizations.
4. The letter, petition, or email (or other communication) addressed to the university or college administration or other body with authority over the educational institution must be signed by **one or more** lawmakers.

In some instances, individuals or groups distribute flyers or put up posters urging students to email the administration to demand the disinvitation of an invited speaker. For instance, in 2021, the University of Virginia chapter of Young America's Foundation faced opposition to its "In Defense of Mr. Jefferson" event featuring Representative [Chip Roy](#) and National Review editor [Rich Lowry](#). YAF's promotional materials for the event were either destroyed or vandalized. Flyers encouraging a letter-writing campaign opposing the event were also put up on campus and a QR code allowed students to quickly bring up a pre-made email template that asked the dean of students to "protect our community at large" from Congressman Chip Roy. While it may be impossible to know how many students emailed the dean of students, we think it is safe to assume that at least 10 did, so such incidents are coded as petitions opposing the speaker.

Political motives of deplatforming attempts

Those who initiate deplatforming attempts often do so because they have a political disagreement with an invited speaker or oppose a scheduled event because of the political issues it addresses. Since we lack the ability to directly survey the sources of the controversial expression on their political views, we judge the political motivations associated with a deplatforming attempt based on what can be reasonably inferred about the source or sources of the attempt. This means that we classify the political motivations of deplatforming attempts based on the beliefs of those who initiate them (i.e., "from the left" or "from the right") relative to the controversial expression.

This means that a deplatforming attempt may target a speaker for their perceived "conservative" viewpoints, even if the speaker themselves would not identify as "conservative." For example, students at University of California, Hastings College of the Law (renamed UC Law San Francisco in 2023) urged the administration to disinvite former United States Secretary of Homeland Security [Janet Napolitano](#), a Democrat, because of her support for policies that led to the increased

deportation of undocumented immigrants. Therefore, even though Napolitano is a Democrat and likely would not identify as a “conservative,” FIRE classifies her disinvitation attempt as coming “from the left of the speaker.”

The same is also true for speakers targeted by a deplatforming attempt for perceived “liberal” viewpoints: A disinvitation can come “from the right” even if the speaker would not identify as “liberal.” For example, in 2019 at UCLA, an event featuring [Donald Trump Jr.](#) and [Kimberly Guilfoyle](#) was disrupted by supporters of Trump Jr.’s father after they learned that the Q&A portion of the event had been canceled. The event was forced to end early.

Public response

How college and university administrators respond to deplatforming attempts matters. Clear consistent messages about what kinds of protest will and will not be tolerated help students know where the boundaries of protected speech are. Subjective, inconsistent enforcement that appears to target specific kinds of speech, but not other kinds, confuses students, and possibly emboldens some students to demand the deplatforming of future expressive events.

The Campus Deplatforming database identifies 13 kinds of public responses the college or university may issue in response to a deplatforming attempt.

The term **appeased protesters** describes when a college or university’s response to a deplatforming attempt indicates that it agrees with those protesting an event, or because it concedes to the protesters demands. In 2007, for example, the University of Saint Thomas disinvited [Desmond Tutu](#), arguing his criticism of Israel might offend the Jewish community. Tutu was eventually reinvited but chose to speak somewhere else. Following the disinvitation, the university president said: “He has been critical of Israel and Israeli policy regarding the Palestinians, so we talked with people in the Jewish community and they said they believed it would be hurtful to the Jewish community, because of things he's said.”

The term **condemned expression** describes when a college or university responds to a deplatforming attempt by criticizing the expression. In 2022, for example, when commenting on a [Matt Walsh](#) campus appearance, the dean of students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus said, “we believe [Walsh’s views] are harmful to the trans community.”

The term **condemned speaker** describes when a college or university responds to a deplatforming attempt by directly criticizing the speaker, artist, or performer. In 2023, for example, Pensacola Christian College canceled a performance by [The King’s Singers](#) because one member of the group is gay. In a statement posted on X, then known as Twitter, the college said that it “cannot knowingly give an implied or direct endorsement of anything that violates the Holy Scripture.”

The term **disingenuous** describes when school administrators send mixed messages about whether they support free speech principles. For example, a school administrator or official may say contradictory things regarding free speech principles: (a) At one point, "We support free speech." or even "We frown on disruptive behavior." But also (b) "We will do what we can to address the protestors' concerns," without giving any indication that those who were disruptive will be punished. Administrators may also imply they wish they wouldn't have to adhere to free speech principles: "We are bound by the First Amendment" or phrases, such as, "must follow" or "obligated by."

The term **encouraged self-censorship** is used to describe when a college or university responds to a deplatforming attempt by implicitly or explicitly encouraging or approving of censoring expression. In 2015, for example, after Project: Theatre, a student group, canceled the annual performance of [The Vagina Monologues](#) at Mount Holyoke college because the play excludes the experiences of transgender women, a college spokesperson said:

The student-group decision to cancel the play was made independently of the College's transgender admission policy. As a women's college with a long tradition of educating women leaders, Mount Holyoke College supports and encourages students to take the lead in establishing and governing their own organizations. The College encourages students to seek peer input through open discussion and to consider and respect all viewpoints in their decision-making process.

The term **high honors** applies only when the school, or a top administrator, issues a statement that reacts appropriately to the incident listed by both unambiguously expressing a commitment to free speech and explaining why the school is committed to freedom of expression. There cannot be any contradictory statements by other officials or any form of punishment for the speech in question, i.e. no investigation, censorship, or sanction by the administration.

Examples: "We support free expression at this institution because doing so is essential to higher education" and /or "because it is part of helping students become well rounded adults" and/or "because we live in a free society." The "because" part is a necessary condition for a "High Honors" designation.

The term **honors** applies when the school (or a top administrator) expresses support for free expression but without an explanation of why free speech is important, i.e. the "because" part necessary for high honors is missing. An "honors" designation also applies if a top official admonishes a lower official or school employee for not respecting free speech.

Examples: "This school supports free speech" [no "because"]; "Security should not have asked a student to put away his 'offensive' sign." "The dean should not have cancelled the event. We have reinvited the speaker."

The term **mistaken on the law** describes when a college or university issues a response to a deplatforming attempt that is legally incorrect. In 2013, for example, after students protested [Jennifer Gratz's](#) invitation to speak on campus because of her opposition to affirmative action, the university informed Young Americans for Liberty, the group who sponsored the talk, that the university would not pay Gratz's \$1,000 speaker's fee because it deemed the speech political — despite having paid the speaker's fees for other political speakers in the past.

The term **neutral** describes when a college or university issues a response to a deplatforming attempt that does not support or criticize the controversial expression. In 2006, for example, administrators at Pennsylvania State University informed a student that the exhibit of a student's "visual thesis" was [canceled](#) because it "did not promote cultural diversity" or "opportunities for democratic dialogue." The president of the university reversed the decision and in an email interview stated, "Penn State does not and will not censor artwork. I wanted to make this perfectly clear to everyone. Crossing that line would compromise so many of the fundamental values of academe." The exhibit took place as planned.

The term **none** describes when a college or university declines to issue a public response to a deplatforming attempt.

The term **supported expression** describes when a college or university issues a response to a deplatforming attempt that defends the expression. In 2013, for instance, an online petition started by TFP Student Action, which garnered more than 10,000 signatures, called on Seattle University to cancel a talk by [Angela Davis](#). The director of the center on campus who invited Davis told reporters: "The visit is intended to raise historical awareness of economic, racial, and gender justice issues, and discuss ideas related to Angela Davis' work over the past 40 years. . . . Dr. Davis will not be disinvited."

The term **supported speaker** describes when a college or university responds to a deplatforming attempt by complimenting or defending the person or artist responsible for the expression. In 2021, for instance, a coalition of 11 student groups petitioned the Caruso Law School at Pepperdine University to withdraw a speaking invitation to [Eugene Volokh](#) because of Volokh's use of racial slurs when teaching about the First Amendment. The law school did not disinvite Volokh and the university issued a statement that said:

Professor Volokh is one of the nation's leading First Amendment experts. Indeed, just last month he launched a new faculty-edited Journal of Free Speech Law with a board of editors of leading academics with diverse perspectives. We believe having him share his views on the free speech issues facing our country is consistent with the purpose of the Dean's Speaker Series.

The term **unknown** describes when FIRE cannot determine if the college or university issued a public response to a deplatforming attempt.

Colleges and universities may issue multiple responses — sometimes conflicting responses — to a deplatforming attempt. When this occurs, the Campus Deplatforming database records and lists each kind of public response. In 2021, for example, students at Wellesley College petitioned the college to cancel a speech by [Kristan Hawkins](#) about abortion because of her allegedly “racist” and “homophobic” views. Hawkins spoke successfully, but the college president’s email to campus **condemned** the content of Hawkins’ talk, **appeased the protestors, and encouraged self-censorship**:

Wellesley's policies strongly prohibit discrimination and harassment based on sex, gender identity or expression, and sexual orientation, among other legally protected bases, and Wellesley requires that all student-invited speakers be advised in advance of Wellesley's commitment to nondiscrimination and diversity on our campus. . . [But we also] respect the right of [the student group] to choose her [Hawkins] as its speaker.