



News, Views and Careers for All of Higher Education

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Troy U. Sued Over Speech Code and Art Censorship

Be careful what you joke about — or photograph — at Troy University. That’s the word from the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, which sued the university in federal court Monday, charging that the Alabama institution’s anti-harassment rules amount to unconstitutional speech codes.

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FIRE, a civil liberties group, is strongly critical of speech codes in higher education and has been suing or threatening to sue public colleges with codes that the group considers particularly offensive. To date, four colleges and universities have changed their policies following such suits.

In the Troy case, FIRE also is suing on behalf of an art student, several of whose nude photographs were removed from a campus show even though the student had received an A from his professor for the work involved in producing the photographs. FIRE said that the photographs were clearly artistic in nature and that a sign alerted people that they were entering an exhibit with nudity.

Troy officials released a statement Monday evening saying that because of the litigation, they could not make any general comment about the issues in the suit. However, the statement said that the photographs that were removed “displayed male full frontal nudity,” which is not “consistent with our community’s standards.”

FIRE posted on [its Web site](#) details about Troy’s policies, such as a ban on “indecent expression,” limits on the use of the phone or e-mail to insult others, and a ban on jokes or gossip related to age, sex, gender, race and other factors.

“If insulting or demeaning is grounds for expulsion at Troy, I am surprised there are any students left on the campus,” said Greg Lukianoff, director of legal and public advocacy for FIRE.

— [Scott Jaschik](#)