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VIN SUPRYNOWICZ: Discussing guns dubbed 'academic misconduct'

The forces of political correctness once vowed that, should they ever take over, their free expression on all kinds of issues -- from gay rights to amnesty for illegals to space aliens inspiring the pyramids of ancient Egypt -- would no longer be censored.

Censored? Heck, spouting the PC line is now *mandatory*, as many a professor lately hauled before a college Star Chamber on charges of having "given offense" now learns.

Internationally renowned Austrian economics professor Hans-Hermann Hoppe used a standard textbook example of investment time preferences in a classroom lecture at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, a few years back, pointing out that gay couples often invest with shorter time horizons because they are less likely to have children to profit from investments that mature after they're gone. A gay student filed a complaint -- initially with the benefit of anonymity.

At this next lecture, Mr. Hoppe apologized. The student then complained that the *apology* offended him. UNLV's diversity police wanted professor Hoppe to give up his next raise and his next sabbatical in penance. They backed down when Mr. Hoppe hired a lawyer and went public. Needless to say, Hans-Hermann Hoppe is no longer at UNLV, where benighted Keynesianism again reigns unperturbed, teaching Nevada's youth that Tim "Tax Cheat" Geithner's plan to print billions more greenbacks and use them to buy Treasury bonds is bound to work out just fine.

No, the PC forces are certainly not proving themselves very "tolerant" when it comes to people who want to talk about things that don't meet with *their* approval.

A student who wants to form a gun-rights group at the Community College of Allegheny County in Pittsburgh has been threatened with disciplinary action for her efforts, reports the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education.

Student Christine Brashier says administrators banned her informational pamphlets, ordered her to destroy all copies of them and told her that further "academic misconduct" would not be tolerated.

"CCAC has demonstrated a shocking lack of respect for the rights of free speech and free association," FIRE President Greg Lukianoff said in a May 27 news release. "Across the country, students are increasingly denied the First Amendment right to debate the Second Amendment. At CCAC, this censorship trend has reached a new low."

In April, Ms. Brashier created pamphlets to distribute to her classmates encouraging them to join her in forming a chapter of the national organization Students for Concealed Carry on Campus. The handbill states that the group "supports the legalization of concealed carry by licensed individuals on college campuses." She personally distributed copies of the flier, which identified her as a "campus leader" of the effort to start the chapter.

On April 24, Jean Snider, student development specialist at CCAC's Allegheny Campus, summoned Ms. Brashier to a meeting that day with Snider and Yvonne Burns, dean of student development. According to Ms. Brashier, the deans told her that passing out her non-commercial pamphlets was prohibited as "solicitation." Trying to "sell" other students on the idea of the organization was

prohibited, they claimed.

College officials told Ms. Brashier that the college must pre-approve any distribution of literature to fellow students, and that pamphlets like hers would not be approved, even insisting she destroy all copies of her flier.

The young lady reports that she was also interrogated about whether she owned a licensed firearm and had ever brought it to campus (she has not), and whether she carries a concealed firearm off campus.

Dean Burns reportedly said, "You may want to discuss this topic, but the college does not, and you cannot make us." Ms. Brashier was then told to cease all activities related to her involvement with Students for Concealed Carry on Campus at the college; that such "academic misconduct" would not be tolerated.

FIRE wrote CCAC President Alex Johnson on April 29 about these violations of Ms. Brashier's First Amendment speech and association rights, pointing out that "her free speech in no way constituted solicitation, that CCAC is obligated to permit students to distribute literature and may not ban it on the basis of viewpoint or content, and that if CCAC recognizes student organizations at all, it must recognize an organization that supports concealed carry on campus." FIRE requested a response by May 13; officials responded only by promising a reply from either the college or the Allegheny County solicitor's office at some "reasonable" future time.

"If it is true that trying to 'sell' students on an idea is prohibited as a matter of solicitation, virtually the entire enterprise of the college is prohibited," points out Robert Shibley, FIRE vice president. "All persuasive speech would have to be pre-approved by the college. CCAC must end this unjustified assault on its students' rights immediately."

This incident is the worst and latest in a significant trend of punishing students for debating the Second Amendment in the wake of the 2007 Virginia Tech shootings (where students died because they were denied the right to carry arms to defend themselves), FIRE reports. At Central Connecticut State University, after a student gave a class presentation about concealed firearms on campus, his professor called the police. At Hamline University, a student was suspended -- pending a mental health evaluation! -- after he advocated in an e-mail for concealed weapons on campus.

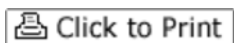
The Students for Concealed Carry on Campus chapter at Tarrant County College in Texas has been prohibited, two years in a row, from holding an "empty holster protest." At Lone Star College near Houston, the Young Conservatives of Texas were censored and threatened with de-listing when they distributed a humorous flier listing "Top Ten Gun Safety Tips," the free-speech group reports. Lone Star's general counsel suggested that even a "mention of firearms and weapons" is inherently a "material interference" with the school's operations.

FIRE's Web site is thefire.org.

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