



P.O. Box 8
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514

Mr. Kevin M. Guskiewicz
Chancellor
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Mr. Martin H. Brinkley
Dean
UNC School of Law

November 2, 2022

Dear Chancellor Guskiewicz and Dean Brinkley:

We are writing on behalf of the UNC Alumni Free Speech Alliance, a non-profit, bipartisan group of UNC Alumni and friends of the University. UNC AFSA's mission is to support and defend free speech, viewpoint diversity, and academic freedom at UNC-Chapel Hill.

We note here a recent incident at the UNC School of Law. On October 25, 2022, at the Law School, the UNC chapter of the Federalist Society hosted Dr. Jeffery Ventrella from the Alliance Defending Freedom. His speech was entitled, "Constitutional Law: Addressing the Deceits and Deficits of Legal Education."

Entering well after Dr. Ventrella's speech had begun, organized protesters sloganized and loudly chanted, interrupting the speaker repeatedly during his speech. They completely disrupted the audience's ability to hear Dr. Ventrella, and they refused to stop after multiple requests to do so. From the beginning at the direction of an Associate Dean of the Law School, UNC security personnel remained in a hallway and did not enter the classroom where the event was taking place. The protest continued after the speech ended, and, with the security personnel gone, the speaker and Federalist Society members decided for their safety to leave by an alternate route.

We believe that any speaker invited by any University-approved group or representative should receive the utmost courtesy and respect, not to mention absolute rights of free speech stated in UNC-CH's principles, reinforced by the First Amendment. It does not matter who he or she is or what is being presented, discussed, or debated.

The protest behavior exhibited at the Law School on October 25 was completely unacceptable. The University should do everything reasonable in its power to prevent this in the future, and "reasonable" should have a high bar given the nature of free speech as a fundamental right. Clearly, UNC was founded on such principles, and its future rests on applying the utmost administrative integrity in words and actions.

We have examined the University's rules for speaker events, and we do not believe they were followed. If the University's actions do not match its publicly-issued words over time (such

as University protocol for speaker events, Board of Trustee guidelines, and the Chicago Principles), reasonable people begin to doubt the University's commitment to free speech and begin to infer political motives. We do not believe this yet. We are merely trying to prevent future violations of our own University's basic rules, intended to further the University mission. We are glad no one was physically harmed here, but we can easily see serious violence breaking out under similar circumstances in the future.

All students must learn reasoned discourse and persuasion carried out within the applicable rules of the appropriate forum, rather than how to apply force. Regardless of whether this speech was at the Law School or another graduate school, in an undergraduate classroom, in a University auditorium, or on campus at the Pit, we believe everyone has the right to be heard without interference. We think University administrators such as yourself must stand to guarantee that freedom. We intend to invite speakers sponsored by University-approved groups, and today we fear for their ability to speak in a civil and safe setting. While we will not be deterred, such protests do have a most chilling effect. That is the intent of the protesters and, by extension, those who allow it.

As a result, we respectfully request that you investigate the facts regarding this unfortunate incident. If the evidence confirms that the disruption of this event violated University rules and principles, we request that appropriate discipline be imposed upon any students or faculty who transgressed the rules of the University and that meaningful steps be taken to prevent a recurrence of such conduct. We also believe the rules themselves could deserve reexamination and strengthening.

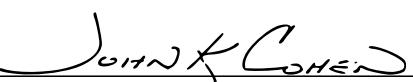
Thank you for considering our views on this important issue, and we trust you will take appropriate action.

Sincerely,

Board of Directors
UNC Alumni Free Speech Alliance



Douglas Monroe Chair, '78



John Cohen, '78



Frank Hill, '78



Robert Poitras, '94



John Stuart Bruce, '75 & '78



Allen Corey, '78



Steven B. Long, '82



Jenna A. Robinson, '06 & '12

cc: Mr. Christopher Clemens, Provost