



VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY

VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY, VIRGINIA 23806

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
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January 22, 2020

The Honorable Ralph S. Northam
Governor
Commonwealth of Virginia
Post Office Box 1475
Richmond, Virginia 23218-1475
clark.mercer@governor.virginia.gov

The Honorable Stephen D. Newman
Senate Chairman
Education and Health Committee
Post Office Box 480
Forest, Virginia 24551
District23@senate.virginia.gov

The Honorable Roslyn C. Tyler
House Chairman
Education Committee
25359 Blue Star Highway
Jarratt, Virginia 23867
DelRTyler@house.virginia.gov

Dear Governor Northam, Senator Newman and Delegate Tyler:

Virginia State University continues its commitment to constitutional principles of free expression and open exchange of ideas. The University believes that it demonstrates this pledge through a variety of resources, trainings and programs for our students, staff, faculty and community. After all, this University's legacy rests on the very shoulders of those committed to the precepts of the Constitution and fairness.

The University continues to maintain its Free Speech policy webpage, <http://www.vsu.edu/student-life/student-activities/free-speech/index.php>, with links to the University's various policies and state regulations impacting public demonstrations, free speech, and distribution of materials. This same website includes guidance on how to report incidents involving infringement upon constitutionally protected speech. The University's Student Handbook, <http://www.vsu.edu/files/docs/student-activities/student-handbook.pdf>, the University's current Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Misconduct and Retaliation Policy, <http://www.vsu.edu/files/docs/policies/1000/prohibition%20of%20workplace%20harassment%20policy.pdf>, Facilities Use Policy, <http://www.vsu.edu/files/docs/policies/4000/university-facility-use-cost-recovery-policy-4200.pdf>, and the University's Student Organization Handbook,

Governor Northam
Senator Chairman Newman
House Chairman Tyler
January 22, 2020
Page 2

<http://www.vsu.edu/files/docs/clubs-and-organizations/student-organization-handbook.pdf>,
demonstrate this point.

The University's Office of Student Life and Engagement, which is part of the University's Division of Student Success and Engagement, continues to present policies and protocols at the regular Trojan Induction Program (TIP), which is the University's standard orientation program for all entering freshmen. This same Division provides similar guidance at campus Town Hall meetings and Leadership Council meetings, which include the Presidents of all Student-led organizations, and for the University's regular Graduate Studies Fair. The Division of Student Success and Engagement also provides Free Speech/Assembly education for members of the Student Conduct Hearing panels.

In addition to policies and regulations, the University's Free Speech webpage, <http://www.vsu.edu/student-life/student-activities/free-speech/free-speech-faq.php>, includes FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) and procedures for students, staff, faculty, and others who wish to report incidents of infringement of constitutionally protected speech. This page includes links to resources, staff contacts and the University's Free Speech Form.

At this time, there have been no complaints filed against the University or employee of the University in their official capacity alleging violations of the First Amendment since December 1, 2018. Any prior matters on this issue, filed against the University, have been determined to lack merit. Should you have any questions about these prior cases, University Counsel Ramona L. Taylor would be available to provide details.

On behalf of the University, I am happy to certify that VSU has fulfilled the requirements of § 23.1-401.1 of the *Code of Virginia*, including the notification to all employees, who are responsible for education of enrolled students, of such materials. VSU will continually labor to improve our knowledge and guide our community in this every-changing free expression arena.

Please accept our earnest appreciation for your continued commitment to the Commonwealth. Feel free to contact us should you have any questions about our compliance or this letter.

Sincerely,



Makola M. Abdullah, Ph.D.
President