

Why freedom of speech should be allowed in college campuses

[Science](#), [Social Science](#)



Freedom of speech is an enshrined right of every person. No less than the constitution of the United States First Amendment grants absolute freedom to its citizens to freely express themselves subject to laws by prohibiting Congress from passing any laws that will abridge the freedom of speech. On the other hand, the same guarantee for freedom of speech is given under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Since there are laws that grant the freedom of speech, campuses have no right to curtail such freedom. As John Stuart Mill aptly said in his essay *On Liberty* in *Utilitarianism Etc*, people, in this case, students should be given the " fullest liberty of professing and discussing, as a matter of ethical conviction, any doctrine, however immoral it might be considered." (Mill, John Stuart, 1910) Voltaire was even more specific on the issue of freedom of speech when he said " I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it" (Voltaire 1906).

The freedom of speech takes on a more urgent and important role inside the school campus. First, it serves as a medium for sharing ideas and knowledge, second, it facilitates decision-making, and third, it clarifies issues and helps facilitate changes for the better. When students are allowed to freely express themselves, the learning process becomes more dynamic and pro-active. Since everyone is free to present their ideas and challenge the ideas of others, academic discussions become more interesting and liberating. On the other hand, controlling and curtailing the freedom of speech on the campus tends to stifle and kill the natural creativity of the students. Who would want to present their ideas if these ideas will only be subjected to censorship? Yes,

it is true that the freedom of speech inside the campus requires a lot of tolerance to nonsense, idiosyncrasy, and bad taste but these are just small prices that we all have to pay to make the learning process more dynamic. Besides, according to the Court in the case of *Roth v US* 354 US 476 (1957), any person who feels that he or she is maligned by the obscenities uttered by another person has the right to go to Court for redress.

When it comes to decision-making, freedom of speech is very important. Note that a decision made on the campus without proper consultation among the concerned students can lead to a lot of protests. A school that makes decisions without really knowing what the students want is putting itself in a very compromising position. If we recall the historical student protest at the University of California, Berkeley in 1964-1965, the decisions of the school administration to impose a ban on on-campus political activities without consulting the students on the matter created an upheaval that leads to series of demonstrations which caused a lot of disturbances (Cloke, Kenneth (1980)). We should all learn from the experience of Berkeley and uphold the rights of the students to free speech and academic freedom.