

Speaker 4 ([00:02](#)):

Radio Free Campus, brought to you by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni.

Steve McGuire ([00:09](#)):

Welcome to Radio Free Campus. I'm Steve McGuire.

Justin Garrison ([00:12](#)):

And I'm Justin Garrison. And in this episode, Steve and I will discuss whether disinvitation attempts are just normal parts of civil discourse on campus or still in fact attempts to censor people. We'll also discuss ACTA's brand new Ohio report card. So if you're interested in Ohio higher ed, that's definitely going to be of interest to you. And then finally, we will hand out this episode's Apparatchik and Hero Awards. So Steve, let's get down to business. Before we get into this, I wanted to make a quick announcement. The Campus Freedom Initiative that Steve and I and our brilliant colleague, Emma, work on, we've been working on this project about a guide for intellectual diversity that can help trustees make positive change on their campuses. That's going to come out later this year. But in May, on May 6th at 2:00 PM Eastern, we are going to be hosting a webinar on this topic of intellectual diversity, how to understand what it means, how to grow intellectual diversity and increase it on your campuses.

([01:10](#)):

Steve will be moderating a panel and our three panelists are John Tomasi, the president of Heterodox Academy, who we've recently had on to discuss this very topic on RFC. We're also going to be talking with Ramsey White, a trustee at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. And Will Inboden, the provost at the University of Texas at Austin. So all three of them have tremendous experience with this topic, both in terms of thinking about it and implementing solutions to rectify this particular problem that affects pretty much every campus that you can think of. And so this is definitely something that you're going to want to come to. We'll put some information about it in our show notes. So if you're a trustee and want to move on this kind of topic, if you're an administrator and you want to pitch something like this to a trustee, but you're not quite sure how, this is going to help you and the forthcoming guide will also be of tremendous benefit. So May 6th, 2:00 PM Eastern, please do attend. It's going to be a great event.

([02:08](#)):

So The Chronicles of Higher Education published an article, I want to say a few days ago. And the title is What Free Speech Warriors... Not Free Speech Advocates, but I guess we put on face paint and run around-

Steve McGuire ([02:21](#)):

It's like Social justice warriors.

Justin Garrison ([02:23](#)):

Yeah, that's right. We're all warriors. It's interesting. We got to go back to that in a minute. But the title, What Free Speech Warriors Get Wrong, and then the subtitle is Not All Campaigns for Disinvitation are Censorship. Which when I saw that, I asked the normal question of like, quoi? I didn't know. So this is a pretty wild piece. I have no idea what to make of it. It's by Randall Kennedy and he's a law professor at Harvard, if I'm not mistaken, right?

Steve McGuire ([02:55](#)):

Mm-hmm.

Justin Garrison ([02:56](#)):

And it's one of those pieces where-

Steve McGuire ([02:59](#)):

And he's-

Justin Garrison ([02:59](#)):

Go ahead.

Steve McGuire ([02:59](#)):

No, and as he says in the piece, he is himself a supporter of the organizations that he's offering a friendly critique of in the piece. And also I recall during some of the debate about DEI statements, he wrote a piece, I believe it was in the Harvard Crimson, where he said that he thought that these did often function as a kind of ideological litmus test and that it would be better not to use him. So I think we should just be clear that this is somebody who's generally very much himself a defender of having a wide latitude for freedom of expression on campus.

Justin Garrison ([03:41](#)):

Yeah. I think that's important to get out there. And I think that's part of what makes us so head scratching to me. And maybe I'm not smart enough to see this. My first semester, because I mentioned CUA, first semester at CUA, I lived next door to a person in the philosophy department and I went to a lecture and they had brought someone in to talk about, you said you didn't want to go to the virtue can't be taught, but we're going there.

Steve McGuire ([04:05](#)):

Okay.

Justin Garrison ([04:06](#)):

But it was a lecture on Plato's Philebus, which even if you're really into Plato, you probably haven't read. I mean, it's just one of those, it's like in the deep tracks of Plato's Corpus.

Steve McGuire ([04:15](#)):

Sure.

Justin Garrison ([04:15](#)):

And it was like this really energetic lecture and drawn lots of diagrams and stuff. And he said, "In the Republic, Plato says there are three parts of the soul." But after having gone through this almost mathematical, arithmetical formula, he drew the conclusion that the Philebus proves that there's actually like 15 parts of the soul. And I thought like, all right, that's cool, but what do we gain from knowing that? And I got the same feeling out of this as you're right, this person isn't like some kind of caricature of the local rep from the AAUP, right? I mean, this is a different author. And I don't understand what he sees as a problem and what he's driving at. I mean, for those of you who haven't read it, the gist of it is disinvitation efforts are protected speech and a successful disinvitation or deplatforming is just a consequence of the discourse on campus.

Steve McGuire ([05:28](#)):

Mm-hmm. Yeah. Or not necessarily an act of censorship, I think he says pretty straightforwardly.

Justin Garrison ([05:36](#)):

There's a lot of clever stuff. It brought me back to how people would talk about the Iraq war or something like this. He cites a scholar from Washington University in St. Louis who describes a phenomenon of preemptive protest. So disinviting is different. It's just the sneak preview of what could happen on campus kind of thing. I mean, there's a lot of this that just I find so strange. Want to hear more about what you've made of it, but just to get out in front, like saying, "I don't want this person to come to my campus," is fine. The speech component of that is fine. That's protected, particularly at a public university. You don't have to say, "I'm really happy that so and-so is showing up." You can say the exact opposite and you can even do it in a really aggressive, foul-mouthed sort of way, right?

[\(06:29\)](#):

But there's a difference between using speech and then arguing that the suppression of a perspective is somehow the logical consequence of just a free market of ideas. If anything, it's more like mercantile economics, like I keep things out so we can keep more stuff in or something like... It just didn't wash with me. Yeah.

Steve McGuire ([06:53](#)):

Yeah. I can't say that I'm persuaded by the article. I would say when it comes to guest speakers on campus, that's probably one of the areas where I'm at my most libertarian. To have a guest speaker come onto campus and give a talk, I find it in most cases, personally, very difficult to understand how people get so worked up about this. You have so many options. You could just not go. You could organize a counter event. You could go and protest in a non-disruptive way. You could ask questions, you could offer a challenging point. I guess sometimes someone's brought on campus and given an opportunity to have their say and people aren't given their opportunity to respond or offer a counter perspective. And I would say that ideally those kinds of circumstances shouldn't prevail. If you're going to bring someone onto campus to speak, probably there should be an opportunity for people to question them or to offer counterpoints and have a little bit of a debate come out of the event, whether it's set up as a debate or there's a Q&A at the end or what have you.

[\(08:04\)](#):

And again, especially on a college or university campus, one of the special places that we have in our society, in our civilization for a wide latitude of allowance for speech, for people to express different points of view, having a guest speaker on campus that you disagree with, even if it angers you or you don't like what they're going to say, seems like something that people should be able to tolerate. I do think that it's generally an act of censorship. I'm trying to imagine scenarios where I could endorse deplatforming somebody after they've been invited. We could talk about a couple of past instances, maybe at say private religious schools. Interestingly, that's the kind of example or one of the examples that he brings up in the article. One thing is, as far as, if I recall correctly, I don't think he draws the distinction between public and private events or campuses, sorry, very directly.

[\(09:10\)](#):

And especially on a public campus, I think once somebody's been invited, under the First Amendment, they should be allowed to come and give their talk. And like you said, people can voice their objections and say that they wish this person hadn't been brought to campus. They could even say, "I don't think they should be brought." But when you cross the line from saying, "I don't want them here," to actually canceling them, then you've crossed the line from speech into action and now you're doing something. So it's not just a matter of free speech at that point as he claims in the article. The other thing is he talks about it as finite resources and a community deliberating about who it's going to expend those resources on and who it's going to invite to the campus. And I could just imagine how people would run with that and use it

to exclude all kinds of people in terms of saying, "Yeah, this isn't really a fit for our community." I mean, that's exactly the kind of thing that people do say when they try to de-platform people.

(10:16):

He brings up Dorian Abbot at MIT. This is clearly one where public opinion thought this guy should be allowed to give his talk on campus. And I totally agree. And yet I'm sure there were people who were saying, "This is not a proper representation of what MIT stands for, for us to have this guy on campus." In terms of the resources, often these speakers are brought onto campus by smaller units within the institution who have their own budgets, maybe even have external funding. I used to run a center at Villanova University and we had our own funding. So for somebody else across the university to try and come and tell me, "You're expending our finite resources on bringing someone that doesn't resent Villanova's values," honestly, my response would be, "Really, what does this have to do with you? It's not your money. It's not even..." Technically, it's the university's money because any money that comes into the university becomes the university's money in a way.

Justin Garrison (11:17):

Yeah. That's right.

Steve McGuire (11:19):

But practically speaking, in terms of the way that these things work-

Justin Garrison (11:22):

There's a budget that, for whatever that's worth, it's [inaudible 00:11:25]

Steve McGuire (11:24):

That's right. And the money's donated or granted to the university for the Ryan Center's use and all of that sort of thing. So that doesn't even really apply in a lot of cases. Now, if we're talking about a commencement address or giving somebody an honorary degree or some kind of honor or award, maybe things get a little bit more complicated at that point. He does mention that one of the things that people seem to be concerned about is the honor that's bestowed on somebody by making them a guest speaker. I'm not sure how much honor that bestows, to be honest. It is cool. And there's a lot of people who could speak on a college campus. And so to be selected, it at least shows that there's some people on campus who are interested enough in what you have to say that they've chosen you out of the pool of people available to come speak on campus.

(12:22):

At a commencement, like I said, or something along those lines, maybe there is a bit more room for thinking carefully about who should be invited under those circumstances. But even generally in those cases, I think I would say that thinking should take place before an invitation is extended. And as a general rule, once somebody's invited to speak on a campus, we should be very, very, very reticent to give in to demands that an invitation be retracted.

Justin Garrison (12:59):

Yeah. No, I mean, I totally agree. I mean, I think there's two minds at work in this piece because I mean, there does seem to be a genuine commitment to things that I think we would support, but this argument, I think, is just bizarre. And on that note of it's a debate about finite resources, it's so easy as we've actually seen, not hypothetically seen, but actually seen that even if you have your own budget at the Ryan Center, the university, I'm not saying Villanova did this, I'm just using that example, right? Well, to host your speaker, it's going to cost us \$15,000 in security fees and we don't have that, so you can't do this.

(13:47):

I mean, there are plenty of ways in which I would be really concerned that that particular argument is just a detour around viewpoint discrimination. It's precisely because so many people are intent on causing disruption for certain perspectives that you almost guarantee a monopoly for the things that don't generate disruption. I mean, we've seen that repeatedly depending on what side someone is on in the current conflict between Israel and Palestine, Israel and Iran, it becomes a proxy, I think, for viewpoint discrimination. There's a part in this article where he says, Stanford, which is the private university that he was using as a representative example, I thought in an awkward way because private and public, as everybody knows, are treated differently in law when it comes to things like free expression, First Amendment, and so forth.

(14:37):

But he was saying it's okay for them to be committed to the ideas that they have because... And then it's this argument. "Some issues," I'm quoting here, "are so grave, so profound, so consequential that they warrant monomaniacal zealotry. First of all, bully for using monomaniacal. I had never heard that word until I read Moby Dick in college, and it's just beautiful. I don't want monomaniac zealots on my campus. That's already the problem. There is a monomaniacal zealotry on campus, and it's widespread and very closed-minded. That's why speakers should be coming in to challenge that, even if it's strictly on utilitarian grounds that Mill would articulate, even if it only gives you an opportunity to reconfirm your preexisting biases. People who are intellectually honest should be able to hear or at least know that somewhere on campus, something to disagree with is happening.

Steve McGuire (15:41):

Yeah. Well-

Justin Garrison (15:42):

I think as I told you, the more I read this, the more frustrated I got with trying to figure out what's the through line in this argument, and I just didn't find one.

Steve McGuire (15:54):

Yeah. Well, and there are outrageous points of view that come to campus. There have been instances, especially on public university campuses where people with views that a vast majority of people would find noxious are allowed to come speak on campus because that's what the law and the spirit of the First Amendment, I guess, requires. And most people would agree that they don't want to hear that on campus and they don't think it adds anything of value. And yet those are the outlier cases. And what can happen is you could take the logic applied to those outlier cases to silence people and then use it to silence more and more people. And I think that's something to be worried about as well. With the private schools and the example that he uses of Stanford and the students not wanting to have a speaker, was it at their commencement or something like that?

Justin Garrison (16:56):

I don't remember. It was Jon Meacham, for whatever it's worth. He was at Roanoke while I still worked there.

Steve McGuire (17:01):

Okay.

Justin Garrison (17:01):

And I had dinner with him, and he was a very charming man.

Steve McGuire ([17:04](#)):

And a renowned historian.

Justin Garrison ([17:05](#)):

Yeah. And so I know what their concern is with him. It wasn't his scholarly acumen or his disposition.

Steve McGuire ([17:10](#)):

It was his political or moral views, right?

Justin Garrison ([17:12](#)):

Yeah.

Steve McGuire ([17:13](#)):

Yeah. But when it comes to a private religious institution, still our general preference, of course, is to have a wide space for free expression on campus, but also if you're going to have certain limitations on that, then have truth in advertising. And if your institution is going to say, "There's certain kinds of moral or political positions that we're not going to platform on this campus," make sure that everybody knows that. And then when faculty sign up to work there or students come to study there, they know what they were getting into, and that's all on the up and up. I guess if Harvard wants to go back to its religious roots and reestablish itself as a sectarian school and start excluding people by that logic, they are certainly welcome to do that as a private institution.

Justin Garrison ([18:10](#)):

That would be great.

Steve McGuire ([18:11](#)):

Yeah. But I don't think that they're going to be doing that.

Justin Garrison ([18:13](#)):

I would eat my hat if more than five people at Harvard could even tell you what the affiliation was, but I digress. Go ahead.

Steve McGuire ([18:18](#)):

Yeah. And then with the security fees, I mean, there sometimes clearly are real concerns about security on campus because people are so upset by a speaker who's coming to campus and that can happen on a public or a private campus and they do need to think about that. But most of the time, the security fees are used as a way of discouraging people from bringing certain kinds of perspectives on campus, I think.

([18:48](#)):

And they also lead to a... Or can lead to a mutually assured silencing. If people know that by rabble-raising and getting a bunch of people to show up at your event who want to shut it down and causing disruptions, that this is going to cost more in terms of both attention and personnel and the money and all that sort of thing. And they can use this as a way to try and shut down either that particular event or even future events because the university is going to react by billing security fees or saying upfront, "You need

to pay this certain amount in order to hold this event." And it's some exorbitant amount that most organizations can't pay, well, that does have a chilling effect on campus in the long run.

(19:35):

And I suppose you could say that that is a collective resource that in some sense needs to be doled out properly. But I really don't think in most cases that it's the security costs that are breaking the bank at these institutions. I mean, we can think of a few examples, the summer of Milo or what have you, where probably arguably millions of dollars were spent and that sort of thing, but these are rare outlier cases.

Justin Garrison (20:03):

Yeah. I mean, I know we could talk about this for quite some time. I think as we've been discussing it, something about this that ultimately it's like, what is it that's ultimately bugging me about this? And I guess one of the things that's dawned on me as you and I have talked about it is it seems to disproportionately reward activist free expression as if that's more valuable than I guess the students who didn't engage in a public campaign to rally support for the invitation. I mean, activist protesting, I mean, those are legally protected forms of free expression as a private citizen and on a public university campus and all of those things. I'm not disparaging that, but that's not all that free speech is. And frankly, I find that kind of behavior to be some of the least helpful form of free speech. Not everyone needs a megaphone and pre-printed signs by some national organization or something like this to have a valid perspective. Yeah, I think there was something about that rabble-rousing kind of component that really stuck out at me.

Steve McGuire (21:20):

Yeah. I mean, I don't mind the idea to some extent that there should be some kind of communal maybe decision making process about who gets invited for certain things. And often there's people who are not included in that process. And then this is the stage at which they get to voice their opinion on whether somebody should be invited or not, right? The invitation's already been extended. Maybe especially when you're talking about speakers who have been invited by people at the very top of the institution, so not say a small center on campus that's bringing people because generally I think they should just be more or less left alone to do what they want to do as long as it's consistent with the policies of the institution.

(22:04):

But even then, I just really think this is ultimately a kind of heckler's veto in advance. And he uses that word. He tries to distinguish it from that. And I don't really see that there's enough daylight between the two. And I think at the end of the day, it is an attempt to censor. And we're still seeing regularly in the news stories of people trying to de-platform people at universities around the country. And I think that our focus should still be entirely on trying to build a culture and establish policies that support a culture of allowing people to speak on campus.

(22:47):

And like I said at the beginning of this discussion, there are a lot of alternative things that you can do when someone's coming to campus that you don't like or that you disagree with or who you're offended by. Even when it's really objectionable stuff, there are other things you can do that I think are ultimately more productive. And I think even when there are people that we don't agree with who come to campus, there can be reasons to hear from them if maybe the main reason is you realize how crazy they are or how terrible their ideas are. I think back to the example of Ahmadinejad coming to Columbia University.

Justin Garrison (23:27):

Yes.

Steve McGuire ([23:28](#)):

Of course, that created a huge stir and you can certainly understand that. But there's also part of me that thinks, in a way, this is a once in a lifetime opportunity to hear from this guy. And I don't know how much he has to say that's of value. He's not going to persuade me of anything. I already more or less know what he thinks or probably what he's going to say, but it still is fascinating to have the opportunity to see this person in the flesh saying what he thinks. And I don't see why a university wouldn't be a place that would be open to having that kind of an event, even though so much of what the guy says and does is just so profoundly objectionable.

Justin Garrison ([24:17](#)):

Yeah. Well, why don't we move on to something that is profound, but definitely not objectionable, which is this Ohio-

Steve McGuire ([24:29](#)):

Our work.

Justin Garrison ([24:29](#)):

What's that?

Steve McGuire ([24:30](#)):

I said our work.

Justin Garrison ([24:31](#)):

That's right. That's right. We've been talking about what other people are up to. Now we're getting to the good stuff. So recently, ACTA released the Ohio report card. This is something that our CFI team spent months working on, painstaking research about different schools as well as a extensive student experience survey that we conducted in coordination with College Pulse. I want to give a shout out to Julia and her fantastic team. So we will put links to this in our show description because I think it would be really interesting for people to see, particularly if you are interested in higher education in Ohio. But essentially we did our gold standard for freedom of expression analysis of the top five public universities in Ohio. And I'm not remembering them in their order in that, but it was Ohio State, Ohio University, University of Cincinnati, Kent State, and Miami University.

([25:32](#)):

So we looked at those five schools on their entire gold standard evaluation. And then we also surveyed students at those schools about the free expression, intellectual diversity, climates on those campuses. So this has been pretty fascinating. Steve, you might want to say more about this in a minute, but there are clearly areas where these Ohio schools on our report card consistently did pretty well, and there are areas where most of these schools need to make additional reforms, continued progress to boost their numbers in terms of their overall aggregate score.

([26:13](#)):

We could dive into the survey in a minute, but I'm just curious, now that it's over and we've lifted this report card weight off of our shoulders and get to breathe for a few weeks before we dive into the next big project, so to speak, what do you make of the work that we did in Ohio now that it's out there? And we've sent this just last thing, sent our results to trustees at these universities, leadership, and other people as well. So yeah.

Steve McGuire ([26:42](#)):

Well, it's always interesting to see how these schools are actually doing once we get down to evaluating using the gold standard for freedom of expression. And the schools in Ohio are doing better than many of the other institutions that we've looked at. They're above average in that 14 to 15 out of 20 range, which I guess is a C if we're not going to engage in any grade inflation, but the-

Justin Garrison ([27:11](#)):

Michael would kill us.

Steve McGuire ([27:12](#)):

That's right. Yeah, he won't allow that. But relative to many other universities, they're doing better, but there's still work to be done. And I think we have to mention too that one of the reasons that they're doing better is because of Senate Bill 1 sponsored by Senator Jerry Cirino that was a massive higher ed reform bill that was passed through the legislature recently. And I think each of these schools or most of them, because I think in the case of the Ohio State University, they had started to do some things on their own through either the administrative leadership or the board of trustees, but overall SB1 has had the effect of getting each of these schools, I think about three more check marks on our gold standard. And so they would have been basically at the average that we're seeing if it had not been for SB1.

([28:10](#)):

And now they're doing a bit better. There are still things that we'd like to see them do. And so I think there's a real opportunity here that these institutions could pay attention to the signal that they're getting from the legislature, pay attention to the signals that higher ed in general is getting from the American people, right? The surveys that show the decline in confidence, people are losing their trust that these institutions are truly working for the good of the country or that they're serving students well. And there's a strong indication that one of the main concerns is political bias. Of course, also things like ROI and are students being taught the right things that are going to help them to succeed in their careers after they graduate. All those sorts of things, of course, are all part of it, but there is a concern about freedom of expression on campus and a lack of ideological diversity.

([29:08](#)):

And when we get to the survey, I think that was one interesting response we got from students was that it seemed like when asked, they said, "Yeah, we'd like to see more of that among the faculty." But I think the takeaway line here for these public universities in Ohio that we've looked at is that they're doing a bit better than some other schools, but there's still room for improvement. And we hope that they will take the opportunity to get themselves up to a perfect score on the gold standard and really show that they have a genuine commitment and concern for freedom of expression on campus. And the field is still pretty much wide open for universities or university systems to step up and show the rest of the country that they want to be recognized as a real leader on these issues.

([30:02](#)):

Of course, we are seeing some people, Dartmouth, Vanderbilt, UNC, University of Wyoming. I'm sure I'm forgetting others that I shouldn't be. University of Chicago, there are universities that are trying to lead the way on these issues, but when you've got thousands of institutions of higher education in the country, there's certainly room for more. And I think it could really help not only the people of Ohio and the students that go to these universities, but the country as a whole. If the leadership at Ohio's public universities were to look at this and say, "We really want to take the bull by the horns here and show people how it's done in terms of promoting freedom of expression and intellectual diversity in higher education."

Justin Garrison ([30:47](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. No, I think that makes sense. Before we move on to the survey, I guess one word of unsolicited advice, that's what I'm best at giving. One of the things that all of these schools got credit for because of SB1 was the measure that says, "Ensure faculty hiring, evaluation, promotion processes are based on merit and make clear that the institution is open to intellectual diversity." And the legislation has required these schools, the public universities in Ohio to incorporate content to that effect. And I think that's great. But in our experience doing these evaluations of just all of the schools that we've evaluated, this one's really difficult to get. So kudos to these schools for getting it.

([31:36](#)):

I think this is the one that arguably is the most controversial in terms of life on the ground at the campus. And so all of that is a long and roundabout way of saying making sure implementation actually occurs in good faith is really important on this because having the policy is necessary, but if the will isn't there to do it in more than a perfunctory way, that the purpose that that policy's trying to achieve is going to be diminished or perhaps lost. I think that's maybe not the whole game, but that's a huge chunk of what we're after here. And so I hope that they build on this really good foundation that they've been given and take the initiative to really make true the spirit, not just the letter of the law.

Steve McGuire ([32:28](#)):

Mm-hmm. Yeah, no, that's a great point.

Justin Garrison ([32:32](#)):

So you mentioned that the survey came out with some pretty interesting data and that's true. There was content in there saying it was, not like slim majorities, not like United States Senate, like, "Oh, are we going to get 51 or 52 seats this year?" But 70% of students saying, "Our school needs to do more to promote intellectual diversity amongst faculty." Just about as many students saying, "I think it's more important to allow for free expression, even if it offends someone than to engage in censorship." So those are really good indicators, but then there's the other side of it in the same survey. About 65, if I'm remembering this correct, 65% of students think professors ought to be reported for saying things that the student finds offensive.

([33:20](#)):

And one of the really interesting things I think that we did in the survey is we drilled into those kinds of things a little bit more deeply with, "Well, if a professor said this, what should the outcome be?" And we gave them a range of choices. Nothing. Professor should be investigated but not fired. Professor should be investigated and be fired. And we saw that muddy the waters a little bit in predictable ideological patterns. People who were identifying more in the left were more willing to investigate and fire professors for saying things that might've sounded more right-wing and the opposite happening as well.

([34:04](#)):

There's been a lot of progress that's come out of recent legislation. And as you rightly said, some of the initiative had been taken on some of these gold standard questions by Ohio State prior to SB1. So you see that framework, but then you still see enduring concerns that even if the framework is there, I don't want to say things that might be misunderstood or just aren't popular because my classmates, because of my professors. You'll get that self-censorship concern, but it's paired with perceptions that the campuses are fairly open to disagreement. So it's an interesting mix of things pointing in different directions.

Steve McGuire ([34:46](#)):

Yeah. There were some interesting results this time around for the reason that you say. There were some positive signs in there, things that we think these universities could build on, but then also some of the old

problems are still there, the willingness to engage in tolerant behavior. And yes, you see the political differences when you look at the subgroups, conservative versus liberal or Republican versus Democrat. And in a way that maybe fits with what I was saying earlier about the message to take from the report card, which is that maybe in some ways these schools are doing a bit better than some others, and they're not doing as well as they ought to be. And they should really take the opportunity to become what we hope all or most universities in the country will become, which are places where people go and embrace free expression and intellectual diversity.

(35:44):

And they could point to some of these results that we've provided and talk to their campus communities about it even. They could do... Of course, one of the gold standard measures is we want them to conduct these kinds of surveys themselves on a fairly regular basis. Schools often do do surveys of their students, asking them all sorts of questions, although questions about free expression on campus and intellectual diversity are often not part of those surveys. They ask about other things.

(36:14):

So incorporate these things in and report them back and have conversations on campus about the results and see how people react, see what they want to do about it, think about things that the university could implement, whether it's policies or new activities or creating a center, all sorts of things that could be done to try and build a culture of freedom of expression on campus. The problem that we so often run into, I think, is that there is just really not a will to do that. I think in Ohio, there are people who do want to do that. Maybe not people who have all the power or all the votes yet, but there are people who want to do that. And hopefully this work can be something that they can use to convince other people that there is an issue here and we should do something about it.

Justin Garrison (37:11):

Yeah. I mean, I think the upside here is there are really good things happening in Ohio and the State House has set them up for some success. Now is the time for campuses, public and private, to take the initiative and make progress, become 20 out of 20s.

Steve McGuire (37:30):

Yeah. And I think people should think about this both in terms of the experience that students are getting on campus, but also what kind of graduates do people in Ohio want coming out of their taxpayer supported public institutions in terms of not only the character of the students and preparing them to live lives that are well lived, but also in terms of their economic contributions that they're going to make to the state and to the country, and also preparing them for citizenship so that they are people who graduate who are ready to engage with people across the aisle, who are willing to hear ideas that they don't like and not just automatically recoil or try to shut those people down, but prepared to engage in argument and debate with them, which is something that our country so sorely needs. And we should be able to look to our universities to do their best to try and prepare the people who graduate from those universities to be productive citizens.

(38:44):

And I think a big part of that is modeling for them while they're on campus and also giving them opportunities to engage in the give and take of debate and hearing the various views and policy ideas and perspectives that are out there. If the students go to campus and they're on a bubble, or sorry, in a bubble on campus and they only ever hear the views that are popular on campus, and they don't hear any of the views that might be more commonly held even just a couple of miles down the road, right? How is that serving the state? How is that serving the people of Ohio? They should be going there and they should be learning. What do the experts think? What do the people think? What are the various views out there?

What are the various different kinds of policy proposals out there? And they should be taught to critically engage with and reason through all of those different perspectives that are out there.

Justin Garrison ([39:45](#)):

Absolutely. So if anyone here listening, watching as a trustee or just someone who's interested in Ohio stuff, check out the report card scores, check out the survey results. And of course, when it comes to people who work at these institutions, trustees, administrators, and so forth, our team and ACTA stands ready to assist in any way that we can to help you grow campus freedom and intellectual diversity on your campuses.

([40:14](#)):

So as we wind down, it's time for our awards segment. And this time I am going to do the Hero of the People Award. So Steve, this month, our hero of the people is the UC Davis Law School, and you heard that right, the UC Davis Law School. I grew up close to Davis, nice place, very fun. And this came out of my old hometown newspaper, The Sacramento Bee, which was also super cool to see. But essentially the story was this, the Law Students Association at the UC Davis Law School passed a resolution that would institute, I'm quoting from the article here, "An association-wide academic and fiscal boycott of Israel for its 'ongoing genocide and occupation in Palestine.'"

([41:11](#)):

Okay. We've heard stories like that very often, but the reason UC Davis Law School is the hero is because of what they did after this. So let me just read the rest of this part of the story. UC Davis Law School Dean Jessica Berg announced Monday that UC Davis suspended operations of Law Student Association, LSA, and directed law school administrators to take control of the association's funds. Now, when I was a student and you had a group, your funds were like 500 bucks for the year. I was gobsmacked to see that the student association here has a budget of 40 grand, \$40,000. I mean, you can almost afford a real person speaker fee with that kind of money.

([41:57](#)):

We tried to invite Hillary Clinton to Roanoke, and I think it was like somewhere north of six figures. So maybe for \$40,000, she would wave out to you as the car drives by. It doesn't slow down, but that's it. I mean, that's a lot of money for a student association. So their funds are gone according to this spokesperson. And when asked, "Why did you take this action?" The argument from the school is that, "The Law Student Association knowingly violated University of California policy that requires student government organizations to support activities on a viewpoint neutral basis." Boom. Viewpoint neutrality in student organizations, that's on our gold standard. And so we are totally clued into that, but it was just refreshing to see a school do their job, which is we've got a policy, you know the policy, you're trying to break the policy, you're done. That's great.

([42:49](#)):

So that's it. That's UC Davis. They're our hero. I just thought that was marvelous. I don't care strictly speaking about the content. This isn't because they took the decision because it was based on these ideas. I'd just be like more viewpoint discrimination or something like that. But you clearly don't get to engage in these kinds of activities per system policy. Yeah. And they-

Steve McGuire ([43:14](#)):

Play crazy games, win crazy prizes.

([43:16](#)):

Yeah, and they enforce the rules, which is-

Justin Garrison ([43:18](#)):

Yeah. I mean, can you imagine that in a university today?

Steve McGuire ([43:23](#)):

I know. It's so rare.

Justin Garrison ([43:24](#)):

Brother, where's it going? So yeah, so that was it. I thought that was marvelous and I'm happy to have contributed that to our episode today.

Steve McGuire ([43:30](#)):

Yeah. Great. Well, I'm always happy when I get to do the Apparatchik of the Month and that's what I'll be doing now. The Apparatchik of the Month this month is a professor at UCLA. Everyone now listening to this will probably know that Barry Weiss was supposed to speak at the university and ended up... The details are a little murky, but it sounds in part like Barry Weiss's team backed out because they couldn't get the security concerns that were required ironed out with the university. And I believe the university has said that she will do the event at some time in the future, whether it's on Zoom or in person, that all remains, as far as I know, uncertain.

([44:20](#)):

And so the story blew up in the media when it was first reported that this event wasn't going forward. And then though, it blew up again. And I want to shout out the guy who did it. His name's Stu Smith. He works now, he's affiliated with the Manhattan Institute, and he runs a X account, the Stu Stu Studio. And-

Justin Garrison ([44:42](#)):

Oh, is that a Phil Collins reference? Oh, man.

Steve McGuire ([44:46](#)):

But this guy just doggedly does amazing work going and watching events, webinars, Zoom events, documenting all sorts of stuff, some of the craziest stuff that happens in higher ed. And in this case, I believe he submitted a public records request to get the emails of the people at this Burkle Center at UCLA that were involved in this Barry Weiss event that was supposed to happen. And in it, he got the emails of this one professor who was working behind the scenes to try and have... Basically complaining that Barry Weiss shouldn't be platformed. And I think at one point she does say, "Oh, we shouldn't cancel the event per se, but can we get the name of our center off of it?" But I just want to read a couple of the quotes because they're so illuminating about the attitude that prevails in many corners of academia.

([45:46](#)):

This is the professor emailing one of her colleagues. Quote, "I think it is disappointing that we are platforming a woman who has helped drive the narrative that universities are not places of academic freedom and thus has helped drive the attacks on the very university we work at." Well, now this professor's emails are driving the narrative because in fact, she's demonstrating that it's not a place of academic freedom or at least free speech and free expression. A couple more here, and I'm reading from the College Fix's coverage of this, but I did want to mention Stu, and not least because Stu does all this work, putting this stuff out on X, and then other accounts and often bigger accounts come and they just take it and use it. And it's often the case that he'll probably put in hours prepping this stuff and he'll get a few hundred, few thousand likes on his post and some other larger account will get 10,000. And it just must be extremely frustrating for him sometimes.

[\(46:52\)](#):

But anyway, she also said, the professor, "While I know canceling her lecture would just feed her I got canceled narrative, can we at least take the Burkle name off the lecture?" And this is amazing too, because clearly this woman it seems would like to cancel her and wants to do everything that she thinks is practically possible to distance the center. And she had said that she would resign from the center if the talk went forward. And I just wanted to highlight this for the Apparatchik of the Month because I think it is a rare window into something that's actually happening behind the scenes a lot on college and university campuses.

[\(47:36\)](#):

And an enormous amount of people's time and energy is spent on dealing with people who don't want to platform somebody or who want to cancel event. And maybe up to a certain point, some of that is the kind of thing that comes with the territory of inviting somebody. I mean, these are your colleagues or your students or whoever it is. And so you do have to negotiate with them on some level as part of a community. But at one point, the person she's corresponding with is offering to set up to have a meeting with her to discuss these concerns. So he's spending the time reading and responding to the emails. Maybe he's had to spend time having a one-on-one meeting to discuss. And what's the problem? Barry Weiss, a nationally known journalist is coming to campus to speak, right?

[\(48:27\)](#):

It's something that should be so unobjectionable and clearly the kind of thing that should be able to happen on a public university campus. And this woman's working overtime behind the scenes trying to, if not cancel it, at least register her belief that this person should not be allowed to speak on campus, or at least that her center should not be platforming her. And if they can't cancel the event, at least not be associated with it. And so in a way, we might say she's a hero for giving us this opportunity to illuminate this kind of activity, but I have to give her the Apparatchik of the Month award. And my advice generally would be, again, okay, yes, you have to negotiate with your colleagues and stuff, but people should just not give into this kind of pressure.

[\(49:17\)](#):

And this kind of behavior and this kind of perspective on these events is exactly the kind of thing that we need to minimize on our college and university campuses. We need to build up a much stronger sentiment that, no, no, people are allowed to speak on our campus. And if you don't agree with this person or don't like this particular selection, just don't go, hold a counter event, write an op-ed about it and say what you don't like about this person's ideas. Go there and question them. There's so many things that you could do, but the idea that somehow Barry Weiss is beyond the pale or outside the realm of the kind of person or represents the kind of ideas that don't belong on a university campus is just insane.

Justin Garrison [\(50:01\)](#):

Yeah. Right. So Ahmadinejad is in and Barry Weiss is out. What a crazy world that we live in.

Steve McGuire [\(50:07\)](#):

Yeah. Although when Ahmadinejad came to Columbia, the president at the time, Bollinger did give a long speech in advance where he basically denounced him to his face.

Justin Garrison [\(50:19\)](#):

I mean, I remember watching that. And remember it was a woman's voice was his English language translator and Ahmadinejad's response was like, "So I'm your guest and you start out by insulting me? What kind of country is this?"

Steve McGuire ([50:33](#)):

Yeah. Right.

Justin Garrison ([50:35](#)):

And I thought like, yeah, but you're not quite like just a... Anyways.

Steve McGuire ([50:39](#)):

You're not any old speaker. Yeah.

Justin Garrison ([50:41](#)):

Yeah. You're not just some humble folksy guy in a jacket with no tie.

Steve McGuire ([50:44](#)):

Yeah. Yeah.

Justin Garrison ([50:44](#)):

But yeah, I mean, it's a real window into the uglier components of academic life, just this constant Borgia level backstabbing for zero stakes through email. It's so blah. Being a dean has got to be one of the worst jobs ever. God bless anyone who does that job faithfully.

Steve McGuire ([51:12](#)):

All right. Well, I think that brings us to a close for this episode. Another fun series of things to discuss on Radio Free Campus, and I'm sure there'll be more next month or almost guaranteed. So we're almost out of... The semester's almost over, so maybe by next month there'll be less cancellations, but I'm sure something else will come up.

Justin Garrison ([51:33](#)):

Well, for those of you who pay attention to these things, we've been at this show for about a year now, and it's been a true delight to work with you, Steve, and Curtis, our producer, and everyone at ACTA who supports us in this show on the backend and getting things ready. So that's been great. I'm looking forward to doing new episodes, just keep going with this project. Yeah. So we'll be back soon. And just in case you missed it, Sussudio is the worst Phil Collins song ever and maybe just the worst song ever. So I would love to have that guy on our show, but he's got to change the name of that channel.

Steve McGuire ([52:12](#)):

I'll DM him and let him know.

Justin Garrison ([52:17](#)):

All right, everybody. Thank you so much. Like and subscribe to our show. And until next time, KBO.

Speaker 4 ([52:24](#)):

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Speaker 1 ([53:00](#)):

65% of undergraduates at Ohio Universities believe professors should be reported to the university if they say something that students find offensive. Discover more at goacta.org.