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Free Speech Zone

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Free Speech Zone

Submitted by Richard Flynn

2/17/2009

Question:

At the last Senate meeting, Vice President Thompson made reference to the difficult logistics of providing security for the canceled talk by Professor William Ayers at both the PAC and at the Free Speech Zone (presumably the rotunda at the Russell Student Center). I have searched various documents, including the Student Conduct Code, and I cannot find a reference to this Free Speech Zone. If Georgia Southern does have such a zone, where is it authorized? Furthermore, if Georgia Southern does indeed have such a zone, has its legality and/or constitutionality been evaluated?

Valdosta State recently became notorious over its attempt to enforce a draconian free speech zone. In September, their new president rescinded the policy. See <http://www.thefire.org/index.php/article/9695.html>

Please direct us to Georgia Southern's policy and provide us with an analysis of whether or not that policy respects both the letter and the spirit of the first amendment and the academic and intellectual freedom that many of us believe should be the hallmark of a public university.

Rationale:

Academic and intellectual freedom is of concern to every member of the University community regardless of their ideologies or political affiliations.

Senate Response:

Discussed at the March 24, 2009, meeting: "Free Speech Zone asked about the location, authorization, and legality of free speech zones on campus and had been answered by University Attorney Lee Davis. The University routinely regulates where

and when certain kinds of speech are permitted so that the mission of the University is not impeded. The usual free speech zone at GSU is by the Rotunda outside the Russell Union where folks who are not members of the University community and have not been invited by a campus organization to speak can express themselves without interfering with other university activities. GSU's free speech zone is solidly upheld by law and university policies regarding the zone can be found on the University webpage under Russell Union.

[Free Speech Zone Response Memo](#)