



GSO Senate Resolution 15.06

A Resolution Supporting a Change to the Syracuse University Computing and Electronic Policy's Definition of Harassment so as to Protect Free Speech

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Whereas, the Syracuse University Computing and Electronic Policy states: "Harassment: Harassing others by sending **annoying**, abusive, profane, threatening, defamatory or **offensive** messages is prohibited. Some examples include: obscene, threatening, or repeated unnecessary messages; **sexually, ethnically, racially, or religiously offensive messages**; continuing to send messages after a request to stop; and procedures that hinder a computer session (emphasis added)"; and

Whereas, this policy's use of the terms "annoying" and "offensive" is vague, overly broad, and subjective, which restricts expression and stifles academic freedom by prohibiting the discussion of controversial yet important political, social, and economic issues that form the basis of legitimate academic debate; and

Whereas, the enforcement of this policy has resulted in the expelling of a School of Education student and the investigation of a Law student for actions widely considered to be within the bounds of protected expression, resulting in Syracuse University developing a reputation as one of the worst universities in the nation for free speech; and

Whereas, a policy narrowly tailored and less restrictive of free speech will enhance academic freedom and the quality of education, create goodwill throughout the University community, repair the University's reputation regarding free speech and students' rights, and recommitted the University to its stated principle of safeguarding the freedom of expression; therefore be it

Resolved, that the Graduate Student Organization of Syracuse University strongly encourages the University Policy Committee to revise the Computing and Electronic policy's definition of Harassment so as to better protect free speech; and

Resolved, that such changes to the definition of harassment should include eliminating the words "annoying" and "offense" and replacing them with more specific language such as "threats of violence, obscenity, child pornography, and harassing communications as defined by law," and a clause clarifying that Constitutionally protected free speech is not harassment.