Controversial Speech on the College Campus: Working towards Dialogue amidst Uncertainty

PreDoctoral Leadership Development Institute
PLDI 504 Capstone Project
April 28, 2017
Outline of the Presentation

- Introduction
- Definitions and Overview
- Stakeholder Analysis
- Suggestions for Campus Leaders
- Conclusions
- Questions and Discussion
Protests, Violence Prompt UC Berkeley to Cancel Milo Yiannopoulos Event

![Image of protest scene]

*The New York Times, February 1, 2017*

![Image of fire and protest scene]

*Inside Higher Ed, February 2, 2017*
If U.C. Berkeley does not allow free speech and practices violence on innocent people with a different point of view - NO FEDERAL FUNDS?
Ann Coulter Cancels Her Speech at Berkeley Amid Safety Dispute

I’m very sad about Berkeley’s cancelation, but my sadness is greater than that. It is a dark day for free speech in America.
Students Protest Charles Murray’s ‘Racism’ and ‘Classism’ at NYU

Protesters disrupt talk by pro-police author, sparking free-speech debate at Claremont McKenna College

Cal State L.A. cancels conservative speaker, speaker coming anyway

Federal judge stops Auburn from canceling white nationalist Richard Spencer speech. Protests and a scuffle greet him.
Students’ Demands on Campus Speech

In addition to campus protests, institutions of higher education have had to address other demands from their students to regulate speech on campus:

- *Trigger warnings* to avoid emotional distress
- *Safe spaces* to shield marginalized students
- *Bias response teams* to report prejudiced behavior
- *Microaggression trainings* to address discrimination
Guiding Questions

• How will institutions of higher education deal with the increased tension and decreased civility on campus in the contemporary moment?

• Amidst sustained and ongoing critiques of their mission, how can colleges and universities work to continue to cultivate an atmosphere of open intellectual inquiry?

• How do institutions of higher education remain open to the expression of a multiplicity of perspectives while also protecting marginalized groups on campus?
Response from Campus Leaders

In responding to these protests and demands, campus leaders have walked a narrow line, with a concern to:

• Uphold the right to free speech
• Enable a civil environment for dialogue
• Provide safety for students
• Serve their multiple constituents
• Honor the institution’s mission and values
“Our commitment to academic freedom means that we do not support so-called trigger warnings, we do not cancel invited speakers because their topics might prove controversial and we do not condone the creation of intellectual safe spaces where individuals can retreat from ideas and perspectives at odds with their own.”

John Ellison
Dean of Students
University of Chicago
Letter to the class of 2020
Critiques of Higher Education

As tension on college campuses across the nation increased in the aftermath of the 2016 US presidential election, institutions of higher education have been placed under increased public scrutiny, having had to deal with the allegations that they:

• Are intolerant of the expression of conservative opinions
• Do not welcome students with conservative political views
• Inculcate students with liberal ideology and bias
• Do not protect free speech rights on campus
“The fight against the education establishment extends to you too. The faculty, from adjunct professors to deans, tell you what to do, what to say, and more ominously, what to think. They say that if you voted for Donald Trump, you’re a threat to the university community. But the real threat is silencing the First Amendment rights of people with whom you disagree.”
“I share apprehensions about President-elect Trump, but I also fear the reaction was evidence of how insular universities have become. When students inhabit liberal bubbles, they’re not learning much about their own country. To be fully educated, students should encounter not only Plato, but also Republicans.”

Nicholas Kristof

“The Dangers of Echo Chambers on Campus”

*The New York Times*

December 10, 2016
“The right to peacefully protest, including on campuses, is sacrosanct. But before exercising that right, each of us should ask: Might it not be better to listen respectfully and try to learn from a speaker with whom I disagree? Might it better serve the cause of truth-seeking to engage the speaker in frank civil discussion?”

Robert P. George & Cornel West
March 14, 2017
DEFINITION OF FREE SPEECH
Freedom of Speech & Speech Restrictions

Freedom of Speech is granted by the First Amendment:

Free expression of ideas and opinions without government restrictions.

- Private individuals and businesses can restrict speech within limits.
- Additionally, under Supreme Court doctrine, the government can put some restrictions on some kinds of speech - "fighting words," obscenity, child pornography.
Does the current political climate and need to ensure safety for students necessitate public universities updating these definitions (in practice, i.e., speech codes)? Or would this amount to government censorship?
Perspectives on Free Speech
Academic Freedom at American Institutions of Higher Education
Historical Case Study: The Genovese Affair

"I do not fear or regret the impending Vietcong victory in Vietnam. I welcome it."
-Eugene Genovese, 1965
STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS
Who are the Stakeholders?
Stakeholders’ Interests vs. Mitigation Strategy

1. Recognizing the rights of different stakeholders
2. Protecting these rights without endangering others
   - Educate protestors to be non-violent and non-disturbing
   - Mediate communication between the administration, host organizations, and protesters
   - Provide adequate safety measures for protesters and attendees
Stakeholder Analysis: Case Study
University of Wisconsin: Pundit Ben Shapiro’s lecture

Speaker: Ben Shapiro

University Police

University Administrators

Protestors

Invitor: (Young Americans for Freedom)

Audience
Stakeholder Analysis: University of Wisconsin

We would like to take a look at some of the actions because we want to understand how each stakeholder affects the process.

**Speaker:** Ben Shapiro

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Delivered the speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Heckled both audience and protesters.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Invitor:** (Young Americans for Freedom)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Invited the speaker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Attempted to negotiate with protester during the event - Failed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stakeholder Analysis: University of Wisconsin

The audience and protesters belonged to the larger cohort of students. It is important to understand that these two are not opposed to each other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encouraged by the speaker, yelled back at the protesters after they disrupted the event.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protesters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Continuously disrupted the speech by yelling and standing in line in front of the stage.  
2. Yelled outside of the room until the end of the event. |
Stakeholder Analysis: University of Wisconsin

These two stakeholders are the most relevant for administrators, as they represent the University’s response to the event.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University Police</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Stood by the speaker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Did nothing while protesters disrupted the event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Escorted protesters out of the room.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Remained there for the whole process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University Administrators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Allowed the speaker to hold the event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Anticipated protests, sent university police to the site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ground rules: If university police have to stop protesters, they have to shut the entire event.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Protecting Marginalized Groups & Promoting Inclusion

We need to establish the difference between:

- **Diversity**: Representation of groups (academia’s strength)
- **Inclusion**: Participation of those groups (generally not as strong)

Groups need a **place and time** to get together and **interact**
- Lead/encourage discussions (civility)
- Provide forums and debates
- Teach groups how to interact with each other; not just how to talk
CAMPUS LEADERS: CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Concerns for and Recommendations to Campus Leaders

Public Relations & Communication

Campus & Public Safety

Teaching & The Classroom
Public Relations and Communication

- Promote an inclusive environment
  - Send inclusive statements/announcements
  - Actively coordinate protesters

- Reach out to community
  - Hold open-to-public educational events
  - Facilitate faculty and media relationship
Public Relations and Communication

Encourage expression of different views on a safe platform

Debate: College Democrats vs. College Republicans

"Challenge Ideas, Not People"

Trump supporters exchange ideas with Sanctuary Campus protestors at Rutgers march
Three important aspects:
1. Proactive measures
2. Providing security
3. Having an action plan

- Preparing for the worst case scenario.
- Having a coordinated effort between campus leaders, student groups, police, and city/community.
Responses in the Classroom

- Fostering openness and intellectual curiosity
  - Learning from an argument you disagree with
- Developing effective communication skills
  - Learning to communicate across multiple audiences
- Using and applying ethical inquiry
  - Learning from the discussion of case studies
Responses in the Classroom

Teaching Toolkit

- Historical context
- Group work
- Resisting simplification
- How to read and assess a text
  - Science and evidence
  - Ways to access “good research”

Southern Poverty Law Center

- Tolerance
- Polarization
- Income inequality
Responses in the Classroom

New York University, “Queer Cultures” & “Intersections of Race, Gender and Sexuality in a Global Context,” Professor: Gayatri Gopinath

*Article by Sara Feinstein, 2017, Metro, “Teaching in the Age of Trump”*

- Emphasizing the importance of intersectionality (race, class, gender)
- Making use of co-teaching
- Contextualizing the political moment
- Demonstrating how social transformation happens
CONCLUSIONS
Questions to Think about

- Mission, values, and image of the school
- Safety
- Stakeholders
- Student response
- Media response
- Framing of the situation/issue
- Ways to be proactive instead of reactive
- Ways to minimize negative outcomes
- Ways to maximize positive learning opportunities
Concluding Remarks

- Discussions of freedom of speech can be very complex.
- As academics and leaders, we must:
  - Protect and defend everyone’s right to freedom of speech (regardless of their values and beliefs).
  - Create, encourage, and facilitate inclusive classroom and academic environments where the campus community can express their views and be heard in a civil manner.
  - Communicate regularly and thoughtfully with our constituents (without waiting for a time of crisis) to convey universities’ special relationship to free speech.
  - Reflect upon our own behaviors and how we can be positive agents of change and thought leaders.
THANK YOU!

A heartfelt thank you to the PLDI faculty, staff, and mentors who have supported us in the past two years:

**PLDI Faculty**
Dr. Barbara Bender  
Dr. Richard De Lisi  
Dr. Susan Lawrence  
Dr. Brent Ruben

**PLDI Staff**
Barbara Corso  
Dr. Ralph Gigliotti  
Christine Goldthwaite  
Sherrie Tromp

**PLDI Mentors**
Dr. Joseph Barone  
Dr. Clark Chinn  
Dr. Wendie Cohick  
Dr. Adrienne Eaton  
Dr. Antoinette Farmer  
Dr. Peter Gillies  
Dr. Benjamin Justice  
Dr. Susan Lawrence

**PLDI Mentors**
Dr. Barbara Lee  
Dr. Rick Ludescher  
Dr. Courtney McAnuff  
Dr. Richard Novak  
Dr. Delia Pitts  
Dr. Sharon Ryan  
Dr. Jorge Schement  
Dr. Ben Sifuentes-Jáuregui  
Dr. Nancy Wolff
QUESTIONS
&
OPEN DISCUSSION
References

- Championing Academic Freedom at Rutgers: The Genovese Affair and the Teach-In of April 1965 https://www.aaup.org/sites/default/files/Kreiser_0.pdf
- DeVos vs. the Faculty https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/02/24/education-secretary-criticizes-professors-telling-students-what-think
- Fighting for Free Speech on America’s Campuses https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/07/education/edlife/fire-first-amendment-on-campus-free-speech.html?_r=0
- Hate Speech on Campus https://www.aclu.org/other/hate-speech-campus
- Here’s Every Major Statement Trump and DeVos Have Made on Higher Ed http://www.chronicle.com/article/Here’s-Every-Major-Statement/239398
References

• How Canceling Controversial Speakers Hurts Students [link]
• How Colleges Can Teach Students to Be Good Citizens [link]
• In Defending Free Speech, Says Teresa Sullivan, ‘the Middle Ground Is the High Ground’ [link]
• In the age of Trump, why bother teaching students to argue logically? [link]
• Liberal Education: Now More than Ever [link]
• Middlebury, My Divided Campus [link]
• Milo Yiannopoulos Tested Progressives—and They Failed [link]
References

• On Campus, Trump Fans Say They Need ‘Safe Spaces’
• Polarized Classrooms http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/tt54-fall-2016/feature/polarized-classrooms
• Should ‘Despised Dissenters’ Be Allowed to Speak on College Campuses?
• State Lawmakers Seek to Force Public Colleges to Protect Speech Rights
• The Dangers of Echo Chambers on Campus https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/10/opinion/sunday/the-dangers-of-echo-chambers-on-campus.html?_r=0
• Teaching Immigration Law in the Age of Trump http://www.chronicle.com/article/Teaching-Immigration-Law-in/238832
References

• Teaching in the Age of Trump” http://www.metro.us/lifestyle/teaching-in-the-age-of-trump/zsJqaA---jiAg3gVppGTKo/  
• Teaching Negotiation in the Age of Trump https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2016/12/12/how-various-disciplines-can-shed-light-election-essay  
• Teaching Political Science in the Age of Trump http://www.huffingtonpost.com/benjamin-knoll/teaching-political-science_b_13327352.html  
• The Test of Free Expression is Protecting Speech that Offends http://www.washington.edu/president/2016/12/19/test-of-free-speech/  
• Why College Student Protesters are Battling Free Speech, in 1 Graph https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/11/21/why-protesters-on-college-campuses-are-battling-free-speech-in-1-graph/?utm_term=.e97108e80b68