



Bill #5
of the 2016-2017 Session

To Charter the Rice University Academic Freedom Working Group

Introduced by

JAMES ALTSCHUL, Hanszen College Junior, 2016-2017
MAHDI FARISS, McMurtry College Senator, 2016-2017
GRIFFIN THOMAS, Student Association President, 2016-2017
Monday, January 30th, 2017

Passed on

February 6, 2017
GRIFFIN THOMAS, Student Association President, 2016-2017
Presiding Officer

Whereas, The Rice University Mission aspires to cultivate “a diverse community of learning and discovery” and to “increas[e] access to both education and knowledge”;

Whereas, Rice University’s student handbook states, “One of the University’s functions is to provide a forum for the orderly expression and discussion of various points of view. Members of the University Community, acting as individuals and not in the name of the University or any of its component parts, have the right to express their opinions, to picket, and to hold demonstrations or meetings on campus so long as such activities do not violate local, state, or federal laws, and so long as University functions are not disrupted and access to any part of the campus is not impeded”;

Whereas, The mission of Rice University and Universities broadly is to serve as a forum for the free exchange of ideas, including those bizarre, controversial, uncomfortable, or outside the mainstream;

Whereas, A commitment to academic freedom and free expression guarantees the rights of speakers, faculty, and students to express their views without fear of censorship as well as to protest views they find reprehensible;

Whereas, After the Committee on Freedom of Expression at University of Chicago issued its report, also known as the *Chicago Principles*, in 2015, peer institutions University of Chicago, Princeton University, and Purdue University among others all adopted sections of the report as operative policy, expressing a commitment to fostering free speech on their campuses;

Whereas, While private universities such as Rice are not bound by law to allow any and all invited speakers to present on campus, it is still to be seen whether exercising this right to disinvite speakers is truly in the best interest of the university;

Whereas, Unabated freedom of expression has recently resulted in a number of complaints from students across the country about its impact on student wellbeing;

Whereas, Many students across the US have sought to reform previous conceptualizations of academic freedom to include safeguards as trigger warning and safe spaces;

Whereas, The past few years have seen a vigorous polarization of sociopolitical views, manifesting itself on campuses as decreased bipartisan discourse and, as a result, consideration of foreign ideologies on both sides of the sociopolitical spectrum;

Whereas, The rights of students to assemble and protest must be bolstered, and students themselves must be encouraged to exercise this right whenever they feel necessary; and

Whereas, The Rice student body does not have an articulate set of values related to academic freedom and freedom of expression; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Rice Academic Freedom Working Group shall be created with the charter of engaging the student body in a robust conversation about their conceptualization of academic freedom and freedom of expression;

Resolved, That through this dialogue the Rice Academic Freedom Working Group shall develop an undergraduate statement on academic freedom and freedom of expression;

Resolved, That upon approval by the Student Association Senate of this statement, this statement shall become the official undergraduate statement on academic freedom and freedom of expression;

Resolved, That the Rice Academic Freedom Working Group shall utilize the Senate approved statement to review and recommend revisions to Rice University policies and statements on the University's commitment to academic freedom and free expression in collaboration with relevant University administrators, faculty members and student leaders;

Resolved, The Rice University Academic Freedom Working Group shall be chaired by an undergraduate student chosen by the Student Association President;

Resolved, The Rice University Academic Freedom Working Group membership shall consist of 3 at-large undergraduate representatives, one representatives from within the Student Association Senate, 2 Working Group co-chairs and one ex-officio staff advisor for a total of 7 members;

Resolved, That the at-large undergraduate representatives will be chosen after submitting an application to the committee chairpersons;

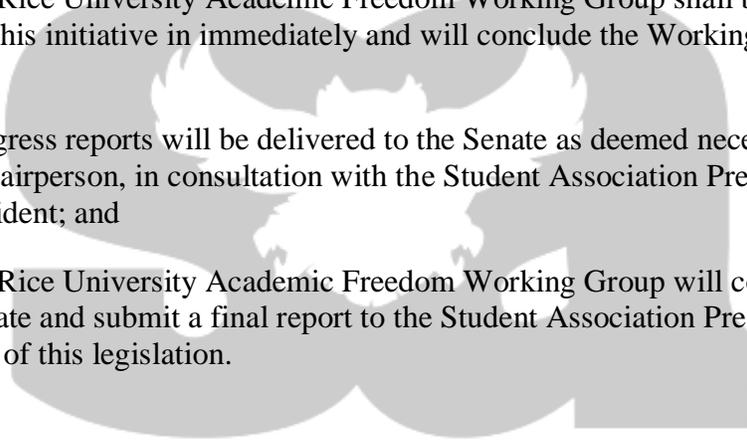
Resolved, That all members will be submitted for approval by the Student Association Senate;

Resolved, That the Rice University Academic Freedom Working Group shall begin marketing and implementing this initiative in immediately and will conclude the Working Group in October 2017;

Resolved, That progress reports will be delivered to the Senate as deemed necessary by the Working Group Chairperson, in consultation with the Student Association President and External-Vice President; and

Resolved, That the Rice University Academic Freedom Working Group will conduct a final presentation at Senate and submit a final report to the Student Association President within a year of the passage of this legislation.

PASSED



RICE UNIVERSITY
STUDENT ASSOCIATION