



Foundation for Individual Rights in Education

David French
PRESIDENT

December 1, 2005

Greg Lukianoff
DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AND
PUBLIC ADVOCACY

President William R. Harvey
Hampton University
100 East Queen Street
Hampton, VA 23668

Rob Pfaltzgraff
VICE PRESIDENT OF
DEVELOPMENT,
MANAGEMENT, AND
MARKETING

Sent via U.S. Mail and Facsimile (757-727-5746)

Dear President Harvey:

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As you can see from the list of our Directors and Board of Advisors, FIRE unites leaders in the fields of civil rights and civil liberties, scholars, journalists, and public intellectuals across the political and ideological spectrum on behalf of liberty, legal equality, due process, freedom of speech, and academic freedom on America's college campuses. Our website, thefire.org, will give you a greater sense of our identity and activities.

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FIRE is gravely concerned about the threat to freedom of speech and expression posed by the persecution of seven students who distributed progressive informational flyers in Hampton University's Student Center on November 2, 2005. As Hampton surely understands, the freedom to express opinions and invite dialogue with others is a hallmark of liberty and is essential to a vibrant, civil community. Hampton University must decide if it will honor the spirit of America's foundational freedoms of speech and expression, or if will instead choose the arbitrary suppression of basic civil liberties on its campus.

This is our understanding of the facts. Please inform us if you believe we are in error. On November 2, 2005, a group of approximately twenty Hampton students participated in a nationwide awareness-raising event by distributing informational flyers on issues such as the war in Iraq, the crisis in the Sudan, and Hurricane Katrina. As reported to us by the students, after about thirty minutes of distributing flyers and answering the questions of interested students inside the Student Center, the students were approached by Hampton University Police officers, who told the students to cease distributing materials, and warned some students that they must remove buttons and stickers they were wearing that read "Resist or Die, November 2." The police also demanded identification information from seven of the participants. All students involved acted in accordance with police officers' directives.

On November 28, the seven students whose information was taken down by police received letters from Dean of Men Woodson H. Hopewell stating that they “were observed posting unauthorized materials, which advocated student participation in

FIRE that flyers are commonly distributed and posted on campus for all types of activities, from student organizations advertising their events, to fraternities publicizing parties, to

FIRE also asks you to consider the historical significance of Hampton University's heritage. As a Virginia institution, Hampton is heir to a great legacy of men who gave their fullest support—indeed, revolutionary support—to establishing the fundamental freedoms of

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert L. Shibles". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a solid black horizontal bar.