

Censorship in Student Journalism: Letter to the Editor

Anonymous



There is nothing more beautiful to me than words—communication, letters, writing, reading—anything involving words has woven society together for as long as there has been society. As a writer, I have always used words to the best of my ability to express art, beauty, and most importantly, the truth. So the story goes, as a journalist, I was not allowed to express the truth in ways I would have liked.

We talk about newness in this issue, so I will do the same. I tried to breathe life into the discontent of students, the mistakes of the administration, and the clear lack of priorities when it comes to budgeting. I wanted to try something new with student voices under the administration. Despite the position I filled being advertised as an “opinion journalist” at MUN’s newspaper, I faced backlash every step of the way for voicing my opinions.

I would try to write about what other students and faculty have thought and said in discussion, and I was told that what I was writing needed to be *true*. Is it not true that the administration barely discussed with students about the reopening of campus, and then proceeded to only give a platform to students who happened to agree with the decision? The only conversation the administration seemed to have and support was with students who *wanted* to go back to campus, which we saw in that article that interviewed students who were excited to go back to campus.

Whatever I wrote, the final version of it would almost never place blame directly on the administration—where it belonged—and it came off as if our complaints were unjustified. Criticism towards the university’s higher-ups was neither accepted nor tolerated. The tiniest complaints I was able to print came after several back-and-forth edits, and they were the bare minimum of accountability the administration needed, and refused, to take. I saw this countless times when my words were met with claims of misinformation, rather than actually addressing the issues: the tuition raise, the maintenance deferrals across campus, returning to campus against the better interest of the students; these issues I raised were met with nothing but excuses. They would not take the accountability they should have in their mistakes and instead chose to tell me and other students that we were in the wrong.

On the flip side, when I wrote about mild topics, I faced no backlash at all; all was well on the wordy front of journalism. A number of times these mild essays received compliments and no edits whatsoever, and were published with no issues. The reputation of the university was not in question, and I was not being “out of line,” so I faced no issues.

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It came as no surprise to me, but it was increasingly frustrating that I was hardly allowed to express my opinion.

I was too afraid to point out the censorship of student opinion then, but I will say it now: if the university cares about student voices as much as it claims to, it must be able to accept criticism as much as it does praise. If attempts to disagree are met with backlashes, censorship, or campus bans, then it is fair to say that the university has no intent to improve itself on the basis of student wellbeing; it only cares for its own self-interest.

To the readers of the journal and the editors: use your words well, and use them as much as you can, as I do now. Embrace means of expression and communication; sometimes it is all we have. Sometimes it is all we are allowed to have.