



Hope for Campus Free Speech

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The Understatement of the Month Award goes to David Lat, who [says](#) in a recent post that “when it comes to free speech and intellectual diversity, U.S. law schools continue to face challenges.”

One Big Challenge, more like: the contempt university policymakers routinely show for the speech of members of disfavored groups, if and when they say things that members of favored groups dislike.

Lat points to a decision, last month, by the Law School State Senate of Columbia Law School. The organization denied official recognition to a group formed to combat antisemitism, Law Students Against Antisemitism.

Reason: some pro-Palestinian students objected to LSAA's definition of “antisemitism.”

The objection is cause for debate, sure, but not for preventing an organization from formally operating. Fortunately, after much attention was paid to the Senate's decision by the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE) and others, the Senate reversed itself.

In addition to bad publicity, one thing that may help improve prospects for free speech on campus is a new rule issued by the American Bar Association, [Standard 208](#).

Standard 208 requires law schools that want to be accredited by the ABA to “protect the rights of faculty, students, and staff to communicate ideas that may be controversial or unpopular.” This requirement is more encompassing than existing (if often ignored) protections of academic freedom for faculty members.

The ABA's action is a big step, but not sufficient, Lat says. The cultures of our schools must change too.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.