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Victory for Free Speech at Bowling Green State University

(Jan. 5, 2024) Bowling Green, OH: In response to a legal demand [letter](#) from [Southeastern Legal Foundation](#) (SLF), Bowling Green State University (BGSU) has walked back its unconstitutional [bias reporting system](#). Many college campuses rely on online reporting forms, where administrators encourage students to tattle on each other any time they feel offended or subjected to so-called bias incidents. BGSU was one of those schools. It maintained a website that banned “bias incidents,” which included “name-calling, stereotyping, belittling, or excluding others” on platforms like social media and in verbal or written communication.

As part of a nationwide [legal campaign](#), SLF [warned](#) BGSU that its bias reporting system was unconstitutional because it broadly banned all kinds of speech. What might offend one student might not offend another. Thus, bias reporting systems are dangerous because students must guess what kind of impact the words they say will have on their peers, unconstitutionally placing the burden of speech on the speaker. And at BGSU, if students offend their peers, they could be reported to the Dean of Students and subjected to punishment. As SLF warned in its [letter](#), it is all too easy to offend others these days, so bias reporting systems force students to remain silent rather than risk any potential consequences.

In response to SLF’s letter, BGSU removed all vestiges of its bias reporting form and anti-bias code from its [website](#).

Director of SLF’s [1A Project Cece O’Leary](#) states, “Colleges have fallen far short of their duty to encourage lively debate on campus. Bias reporting systems are an abuse of authority that quash academic freedom and inquiry. We are pleased that BGSU has committed itself to protecting students’ freedom of speech by removing the unconstitutional bias reporting system from its website.”