



OFFICIAL MEMORANDUM

Voted & Approved by the General Council: 3/09/2020

Date: 10 March 2020
Subject: GRO Statement on Free Speech and Amnesty in Support of Sit-In Graduate Students

JHU Grads,

On March 9th, a group of graduate students from the organization “The Garland Sit-in and Occupation” attended our General Council (GC) meeting and presented some concerning information involving the student code of conduct and its selective application toward acts of free-speech, protest, and activism on campus.

Several years ago the GRO Executive Board participated in editing and providing feedback on the the [JHU Free Expression Guidelines](#) and in particular advocated for the following clause:

“Accordingly, these guidelines are designed to support the right to engage in acts of public expression and the right of an audience to receive that expression. Any negative short-term effects of airing controversial views – provided those views are expressed in ways that do not threaten, incite violence or raise demonstrable health or safety concerns – are outweighed by the long-term benefits to our community of a robust exchange of ideas.”

With this context, we have been informed that specific graduate students who were involved with the The Garland Sit-in and Occupation, and were granted amnesty, have also participated in other, non-violent, protests on campus and have been specifically targeted from within a group of participants for disciplinary action. In addition, the threat of revocation of said amnesty has been used as a weapon towards these students by preventing them from participating in any further political action, regardless of whether said action fits within the clause stated above.

The GRO has voted to express that we expect that students’ right to free speech is protected and that no punitive action is taken against any student based on any previous political action, regardless of whether it is related to the sit-in. We expect that this right is protected particularly in the case wherein said action ended with amnesty from the university. This vote is in line with our previous statement on amnesty and free expression which were voted on in April of 2019, which read:

“The GRO wishes to ensure all members of the Hopkins community are allowed to exercise their constitutional right to free speech without fear of punitive action or retribution from any other member or organizational body within the Hopkins community.”

The GRO has voted to support the spirit of an initiative constructed by the JHU Sit-In, which can be found attached to this letter. Further, we stress that administrative practices of equity and uniformity in the execution and interpretation of the student code of conduct are of the utmost importance in relation to said matters.

Sincerely,
The GRO