

IU's expressive activity policy works to curtail activity in the one space that has been designated as a "free speech zone" for over 50 years. The idea that factions of the university should have to seek permission for protest is inherently absurd. It makes no sense within the logic of democracy that the people who are being protested against are the ones who determine whether and where protests can happen.

Arbitrary rules about use of space are yet another tactic that university administrators are using to claim the university as their own. They deploy the strawman of "disruption" to police space and the bodies who use it. What is so disruptive about the many BIPOC, international, Muslim and Jewish students who have been coming together to voice grievances and demands in the entirely peaceful collective action happening at Dunn Meadow? Black and brown students from across the world praying together, cooking for each other, gardening and doing the necessary work of building transnational solidarity? Why shouldn't university students, staff and faculty be able to camp out on university grounds? We need to interrogate who it really "disrupts" for university spaces to be used by the contingents to whom it is supposed to belong.

Certainly there is an argument to be made about American citizens' right to free speech, unrestricted by administrators to whom a public university does and should not belong. But the issue at hand cannot fall back into an argument for free speech alone. Students, faculty and staff are what make the university run! We are the reason there is a university at all. This policy doubles down on marginalizing the people whose demands should be at the center of the university, increasingly turning IU into a defense wing that shrouds itself in tropey talking points about the right to free speech yet deploys state troopers on its students when they claim that right.

If IU has any vision at all of the campus as a commons, or a public, this policy simply cannot stand.

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