

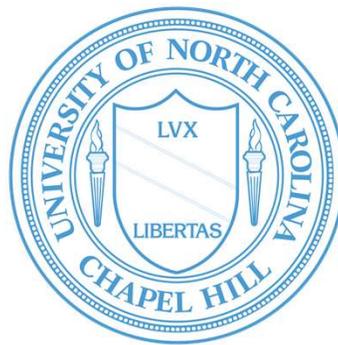
Free Expression & Constructive Dialogue at UNC

Findings and Recommendations

Professor Jennifer Larson: Department of English & Comparative Literature

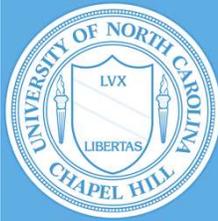
Professor Mark McNeilly: Kenan-Flagler Business School

Professor Timothy Ryan: Department of Political Science



Agenda

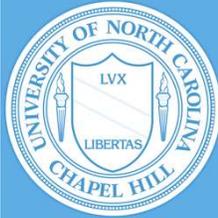
- **Rationale for Research**
- **Approach**
- **Findings**
- **Recommendations**
- **Questions**



Rationale for the Research

There has been on-going national, state, and campus discussion on the status of free expression and civil discourse, often with much heat but little light.

1. We wanted to better understand the culture at our own institution.
2. We thought that a fuller picture of what happens at UNC would be informative for a national conversation about free expression.
3. We noticed a paucity of evidence-based analysis from recent discussions about free expression on college campuses.
4. We thought that the composition of our research team would improve the quality of our effort and, as a result, the credibility of our findings.



Researchers Interdisciplinary & Politically Diverse



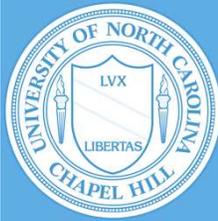
Jennifer Larson
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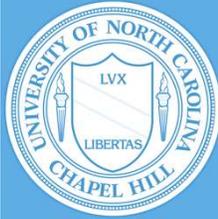
Research Approach

- **Two-wave survey**

- Wave 1 - random sample of UNC undergraduates, stratified by gender & year
 - \$10 incentive
 - **519 responses, 26% completion rate**
- Wave 2 - remainder of students
 - No incentive
 - **568 responses, 3% completion rate**
- **1087 Total responses**
- Responses pooled in findings since they were similar

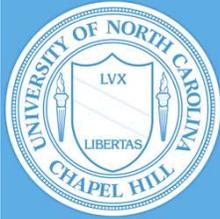
- **Focus-group interviews**

- 8 student groups contacted
- **3 interviews conducted**



Findings





1) Students say that (when politics come up in class) the majority of their UNC professors do try to discuss both sides of political issues & encourage opinions from across the political spectrum.

When asked whether their instructors encouraged participation from liberals and conservatives alike...

- **53.8% of respondents agreed**
- **41.9% chose a neutral response (8.7%), or thought the question was irrelevant (33.2%)**
- **4.3% disagreed**
- Even among students who identify as conservative, only **10.6% disagree** ([Table](#)).
- **15% of respondents *disagree*** that “the course instructor was interested in learning from people with opinions that differed from the instructor's own opinions.”



2) The current campus does not consistently promote free expression and constructive dialogue across the political spectrum.

In the randomly-selected class ([Table](#))...

- Within classes that discuss politics (60.5%), students were concerned that:
 - Professor would lower opinion of you: **24.5%**
 - Professor would lower your grade: **15.6%**
 - Peers would lower opinion of you: **39.9%**
 - Peers would post on social media: **18.8%**
- **36.2% of respondents** engaged in self-censorship at least once. **25.2%** say they did so **multiple times** in the semester.



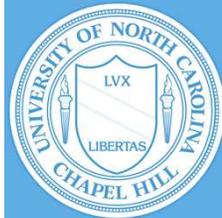
2) The current campus does not consistently promote free expression and constructive dialogue across the political spectrum, continued.

- Respondents reported how well they thought various words and phrases describe “students on the liberal side of the political spectrum” and “students on the conservative side of the political spectrum.” ([Tables](#))
- Students are **hesitant to apply positive attributes** to the outgroup.
 - **27.7% of respondents who identify as conservative** say that liberal students are open-minded. **8% respondents who identify as liberal** say that conservative students are open-minded.
- Students commonly **apply negative attributes** to students in the outgroup.
 - **More than 65% of respondents who identify as liberal** say that conservative peers are “racist” & “sexist.”
 - **More than 75% of respondents who identify as conservative** say that liberal peers are “condescending.”



2) The current campus does not consistently promote free expression and constructive dialogue across the political spectrum, continued

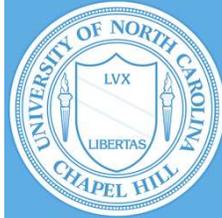
- Many students **see each political outgroups as an important part of the campus community** and are open to engaging socially ([Table](#)). However....
- **15% - 35%** say they are **unwilling to engage socially** with students from the outgroup, and do not enjoy taking classes with them.
- **21.9% of respondents who identify as liberal and 14.4% of respondents who identify as conservative** say that UNC would be **better without** the political outgroup.



3) Although students across the political spectrum report facing challenges related to free expression, these challenges seem to be more acute for students who identify as conservative.

- **Anxieties about expressing political views and self-censorship are more prevalent among students who identify as conservative.**
([Table](#))

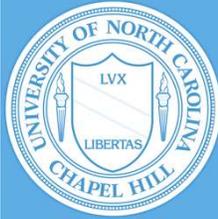
Students' concerns about expressing sincere views in a randomly chosen class		
	Liberals	Conservatives
Would get lower grade	6.2%	38.2%
Instructor would have lower opinion	12.5	49.6
Peers would have lower opinion	26.2	75.2
Students kept an opinion related to class to themselves		
Respondent self-censored	24.1	67.9



3) Although students across the political spectrum report facing challenges related to free expression, these challenges seem to be more acute for students who identify as conservative, continued

- Students reported how often they hear “disrespectful, inappropriate, or offensive comments” about twelve groups.

	<u>Respondent ideological Self-Identification:</u>		
	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
Women	32.4%	17.5%	10.3%
Men	24.6	39.0	52.2
Whites	22.0	40.1	60.1
African Americans	19.8	9.4	7.4
Hispanics or Latinos	11.6	4.9	5.9
Asians	10.7	8.7	6.4
Students born outside the US	10.3	6.0	4.9
Christians	20.4	32.8	44.6
Muslims	14.2	9.3	8.4
LGBT individuals	21.5	13.0	10.9
Political liberals	21.2	11.4	11.9
Political conservatives	57.1	67.8	82.8
N	644	181	201



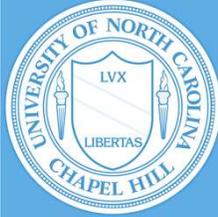
3) Although students across the political spectrum report facing challenges related to free expression, these challenges seem to be more acute for students who identify as conservative, continued

- Students were asked to identify an objectionable political view *present at UNC and then report what steps they would take with respect to that view* ([Table](#)).
- 19% of respondents who identify as liberal support creating an obstruction to a speaker who holds an objectionable view ([Table](#)).
- 19% of respondents who identify as liberal endorse blocking other students from entering an event where a speaker will argue for this idea.
- 3% of respondents who identify as conservative endorse creating an obstruction to a speaker who holds an objectionable view.

3) Although students across the political spectrum report facing challenges related to free expression, these challenges seem to be more acute for students who identify as conservative, continued

Question: Are liberal and conservative students comparably tolerant / willing to engage?

- Approach:
 - Step 1: Identify an objectionable political view *present at UNC*.
 - Step 2: Examine what steps students will take *with respect to that view*.



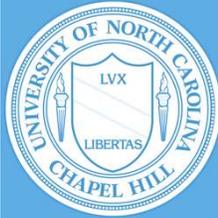


Table 15: Controversial Political Positions Presented to Survey Respondents

Positions liberal students might hold

- 1) The Silent Sam statue should be destroyed
- 2) University admissions should give preference to applicants from disadvantaged racial groups in order to help alleviate past injustices
- 3) Most undocumented/illegal immigrants should be granted amnesty and eventually equal rights as US citizens
- 4) A Christian wedding cake maker should be required to design cakes for same-sex weddings, even if the cake maker is opposed to same-sex marriage
- 5) The government has a responsibility to make sure every citizen has equal access to affordable health care

Positions conservative students might hold

- 6) The Silent Sam statue should be restored to its original location
- 7) Affirmative action should end, and an applicant's race should not carry any weight in university admissions
- 8) The United States should build a wall on its southern border to decrease undocumented/illegal immigration
- 9) Same-sex marriages should not be recognized as valid in the United States
- 10) There is no convincing evidence of human-caused global climate change

Note: Controversial positions were listed in a random order.

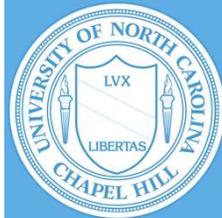


Table 16: Students' Responses to Objectionable Political View

Respondent is:	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
Write an opinion piece explaining the reasons for your disagreement and submit it to a campus publication.	88.6%	76.6%	84.7%
Ask a challenging question of a speaker who endorsed the idea.	90.3	79.9	86.2
N	651	184	203

Note: Cell entries represent the proportion of respondents saying that it would be “appropriate” or “entirely appropriate” to take the specified action. The precise N varies slightly due to item nonresponse.



4) Students across the political spectrum want more opportunities to engage with those who think differently.

- **91.6% of respondents who identify as conservative** say that UNC invites too few conservative speakers ([Table](#)).
- More respondents who identify as liberal (**37.4%**) say that there are too few conservative speakers than say that there are too many (**15.5%**).
- More respondents who identify as liberal say that there are too few conservative speakers (**37.4%**) than say that there are too few liberal speakers (**21.5%**).
- **58.0% of respondents who identify as liberal, 61.8% of respondents who identify as moderate, and 75.9% of respondents who identify conservative** felt the need for more constructive disagreement from across the political spectrum.

Themes and Recommendations



Themes

- 1) Students say that (when politics come up in class) **the majority of their UNC professors do try to discuss** both sides of political issues & **encourage opinions** from across the political spectrum.
- 2) The current campus **does not consistently promote free expression and constructive dialogue** across the political spectrum.
- 3) Although **students across the political spectrum report facing challenges** related to free expression, these challenges seem to be **more acute** for students who identify as conservative.
- 4) Students across the political spectrum **want more opportunities** to engage with those who think differently.

Recommendations

- 1) Remind students and faculty of the **importance of free expression** and offer training on **effective techniques** to engage in constructive dialogue.
- 2) Support faculty by **offering suggestions for and training** on how to foster a welcoming and inclusive environment in the classroom.
- 3) Provide more opportunities to hear external speakers presenting **evidence-based ideas from across the political, social and cultural spectrum**.
- 4) Expand **research on free expression and constructive dialogue** to include issues confronting faculty, staff, and the administrators; and perform the research at **regular intervals to track progress and identify emerging issues**.

Recommendations

- 1) Remind students and faculty **of the importance of free expression** and offer training on **effective techniques** to engage in constructive dialogue.
 - First-year orientation programming (state law): Admissions and Advising
 - Training sessions, workshops and regular communications: Center for Faculty Excellence & Learning and Writing Center.
 - Events focused on reducing social distance: Carolina Union, Campus Y, Housing and Residential Education

- 2) Support faculty by **offering suggestions for and training** on how to foster a welcoming and inclusive environment in the classroom.
 - Syllabi notes to encourage free expression/constructive dialogue; affirm impartial grading: Office of Undergraduate Curricula
 - Pedagogical support and workshops: Center for Faculty Excellence
 - End-of-semester evaluation questions: OIRA





Recommendations, continued

- 3) Provide more opportunities to hear external speakers presenting **evidence-based ideas from across the political, social and cultural spectrum.**
 - Rely less exclusively on individuals, programs, student to bring speakers to campus
 - Creation of a campus office that could facilitate (and fund) balanced speaker invitations as well as publicize the events and foster connections with the classroom: Provost

- 1) Expand **research on free expression and constructive dialogue** to include issues confronting faculty, staff, and the administrators; and perform the research at **regular intervals to track progress and identify emerging issues.**
 - Surveying faculty, administration and grad students about their attitudes and behaviors: FECD Work group
 - More student focus groups: FECD Work group
 - Repeat some measures regularly, ideally biannually. FECD Work group
 - Extend research to entire UNC system. FECD Work Group & BOG



If you would like these findings presented to your

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Questions?



Appendix slides



Demographic table

Table 1: Sample Properties

	FECDS Survey			UNC Benchmark ⁹
	Unincentivized	Incentivized	Pooled	
Entering year				
2018 or 2019	34.6%	29.5%	32.2%	24.4% ¹⁰
2017	27.4	29.3	28.3	20.7
2016	17.2	21.4	19.2	26.8
2015 or earlier	20.7	19.7	20.2	28.4
Residence				
In-state	82.7%	82.2%	82.5%	82.3%
Out-of-state	17.3	17.8	17.5	17.7
Gender				
Female	60.7%	67.0	63.7	59.4%
Male	38.1	32.1	35.2	40.6
Neither	1.2	1.0	1.1	-- ¹¹
Race				
White	73.3%	60.5%	67.2%	63.2%
Black	7.7	9.3	8.5	8.2
Hispanic	5.6	8.5	7.0	8.8
Asian	8.8	16.6	12.5	14.7
Other	4.6	5.0	4.8	5.6
Partisanship				
Republican	15.5%	10.7%	13.2%	
Democrat	38.3	43.6	40.9	
Independent	46.2	45.7	45.9	
N (Complete cases)	568	519	1,087	



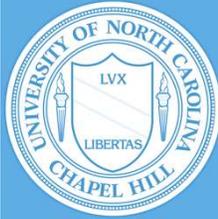


Table 2: Politics in the Classroom

	Politics came up	Instructor offered an opinion
Never	39.5%	54.6%
A few times	29.3	30.8
Perhaps every week or two	10.0	7.0
Most class meetings	8.9	5.4
Almost every class meeting	12.3	2.1
Total	100.0	100.0
N	1,235	1,236

How often does politics come up, by subject

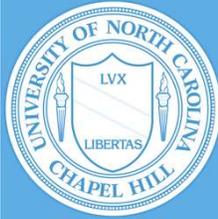


Table 3: How Often Does Politics Come Up?, by Subject Area

	Human- ities	Social Sciences	Health Sciences	Natural Sciences	Gender and Ethnic Studies	Foreign Language
Never	20.7%	19.5%	55.6%	70.6%	0.0%	29.1%
Few	40.2	29.7	31.9	20.2	20.6	44.2
Week or two	13.8	15.1	2.8	2.9	20.6	12.8
Most meetings	12.6	11.4	6.9	3.6	23.5	9.3
Every	12.6	24.3	2.8	2.7	35.3	4.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.00	100.0
N	246	370	72	415	34	86

Encourage participation from liberals and conservatives

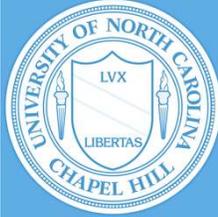
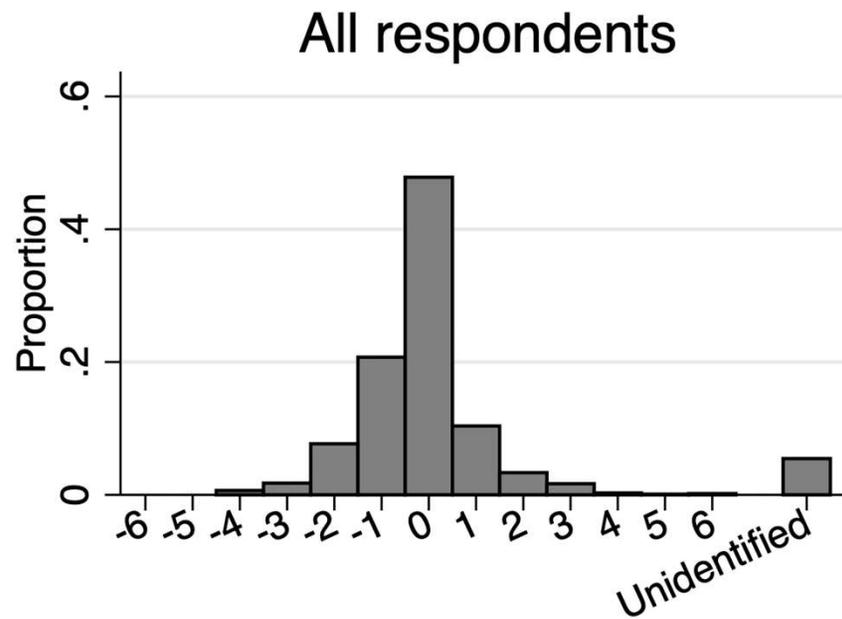


Table 4: The Instructor Encouraged Participation from Liberals and Conservatives Alike, by Respondent Ideology

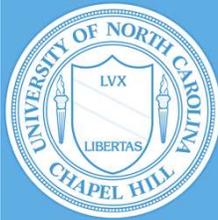
	<u>Respondent Ideology</u>		
	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
Strongly disagree	0.3%	0.9%	4.4%
Somewhat Disagree	1.8	2.7	6.2
Neither	5.6	15.9	10.6
Somewhat Agree	10.0	15.0	9.7
Strongly agree	49.0	34.5	41.6
Irrelevant	33.4	31.0	27.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	392	113	113

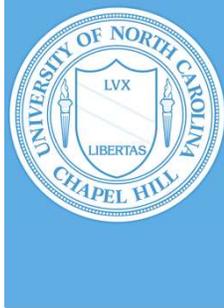
Note: Analysis is limited to classes for which the respondent indicated that politics came up more than “never.”

Views move both left and right



Negative scores signify views that became more liberal over time. Positive scores signify views that became more conservative. Zero signifies no change





Worry about expressing sincere views -- instructors

Table 8: Students' Concerns About Instructors, by Respondent Ideology

Respondent is:	<u>Instructor would lower grade</u>			<u>Instructor would lower opinion</u>			<u>Instructor would embarrass you</u>		
	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
Not concerned	82.0%	64.6%	54.0%	76.1%	50.4%	44.4%	77.9%	63.7%	55.8%
Slightly concerned	3.8	7.1	14.2	7.9	16.8	13.3	6.6	9.7	9.8
Somewhat concerned	1.3	5.3	7.1	2.8	8.9	7.1	1.5	3.5	8.9
Moderately concerned	0.8	2.7	8.9	1.5	4.4	18.6	1.5	7.1	9.7
Extremely concerned	0.3	5.3	8.0	0.3	4.4	10.6	0.3	1.8	8.9
Irrelevant	11.9	15.0	8.0	11.4	15.0	6.2	12.2	14.2	7.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	394	113	113	394	113	113	394	113	113

Note: Analysis is limited to classes for which the respondent indicated that politics came up more than "never."



Worry about expressing sincere views -- students

Table 9: Students' Concerns About Other Students, by Respondent Ideology

Respondent is:	<u>Students would lower opinion</u>			<u>Students would post on social media</u>			<u>Students would file a complaint</u>		
	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
Not concerned	62.2%	25.7%	15.0%	78.7%	62.8%	46.9%	83.5%	70.8%	52.2%
Slightly concerned	17.3	26.6	16.8	6.4	15.0	15.9	2.0	5.3	15.9
Somewhat concerned	3.3	15.9	12.4	1.8	2.7	8.0	1.0	7.0	8.0
Moderately concerned	4.3	9.7	13.3	1.8	4.4	11.5	0.3	3.5	5.3
Extremely concerned	1.3	6.2	32.7	0.3	2.7	8.0	0.3	0.9	11.5
Irrelevant	11.7	16.0	9.7	11.2	12.4	9.7	13.0	12.4	7.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	394	113	113	394	113	113	393	113	113

Note: Analysis is limited to classes for which the respondent indicated that politics came up more than "never."

Self-censorship

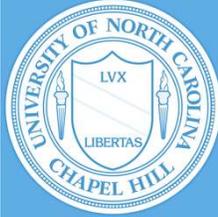


Table 10: How Often Students Kept an Opinion Related to Class to Themselves, by Respondent Ideology

Respondent is:	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
Never	75.9%	51.3%	32.1%
Once	9.9	20.4	9.8
2-5 times	12.7	18.6	27.7
6-10 times	0.0	5.3	13.4
More than 10 times	1.5	4.4	17.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	395	113	112

Note: Analysis is limited to classes for which the respondent indicated that politics came up more than “never.”

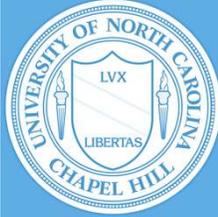


Table 12: Stereotypes of Liberal and Conservative Students at UNC

	Liberals' perception of conservatives	Conservatives' perception of liberals
<i>Positive Traits</i>		
Well-educated	49.9%	76.2%
Open-minded	8.0	27.7
Well-informed	24.2	44.3
Tolerant	9.7	28.6
Intelligent	52.6	73.4
<i>Negative traits</i>		
Racist	68.9	29.1
Sexist	69.7	33.0
Immoral	39.6	37.0
Condescending	70.5	81.8
Follow others without thinking	69.7	78.7

Note: Cells entries indicate the percentage of respondents saying that the trait describes a group moderately well, very well, or extremely well. "Followers" is a stand-in for the phrase, "Follow others without thinking."

Table 14: Broader Orientations Toward Political Disagreement, by Respondent Ideology

Social distance	Liberals		Conservatives	
	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree
<i>Social distance</i>				
Would have outgroup member as a friend	23.4%	63.0%	3.0%	92.1%
Would have outgroup member as a roommate	35.2	51.8	5.9	83.7
Enjoys taking classes with students from the outgroup	21.0	51.4	15.4	67.3
Would date member of the outgroup	60.2	25.0	30.2	55.5
<i>Community inclusion</i>				
Students from outgroup are important to campus community	9.5	72.5	3.5	86.0
Faculty from outgroup are important to campus community	13.4	64.8	6.9	81.2
	Would be better without	Would be worse without	Would be better without	Would be worse without
UNC would be better without students from the outgroup	21.9	48.6	14.4	61.4

Note: For all items except the final one, response options were, “Strongly disagree,” “Somewhat disagree,” “Neither agree nor disagree,” “Somewhat agree,” and “Strongly agree.” For the final item, the response options were “UNC would be [much better / a little better / neither better nor worse / a little worse / much worse] without [liberals / conservatives].” Percentages within groups do not tally to 100% because the neutral category is omitted. This analysis includes approximately 649 liberal and 202 conservative students. (The precise N varies slightly due to item nonresponse.)



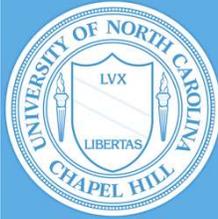


Table 6: Based on Behavior, Was the Instructor Liberal or Conservative?

Strong Liberal	16.3%
Liberal	33.4
Moderate	6.2
Conservative	1.9
Strong Conservative	0.7
Other	0.6
Unsure	40.9
Total	1,236



Table 7: Based on Behavior, How Would you Describe Students' Political Leanings?

Very Liberal	15.4%
Lean liberal	29.1
Even mixture of liberals and conservatives	9.8
Lean conservative	0.8
Very conservative	0.3
Politics didn't come up / Question is irrelevant	44.6
Total	1,145

Offensive comments



Table 13: How Often Does Respondent Hear Inappropriate Comments?, by Respondent Ideology

Respondent is:	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
Women	32.4%	17.5%	10.3%
Men	24.6	39.0	52.2
Whites	22.0	40.1	60.1
African Americans	19.8	9.4	7.4
Hispanics or Latinos	11.6	4.9	5.9
Asians	10.7	8.7	6.4
Students born outside the US	10.3	6.0	4.9
Christians	20.4	32.8	44.6
Muslims	14.2	9.3	8.4
LGBT individuals	21.5	13.0	10.9
Political liberals	21.2	11.4	11.9
Political conservatives	57.1	67.8	82.8
N	644	181	201

Note: Cell entries represent the proportion of students saying that they hear disrespectful, inappropriate, or offensive comments about the listed group several times per semester, or more often than that. The number of respondents for a particular item varies slightly due to item nonresponse.

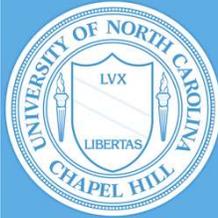


Table 15: Controversial Political Positions Presented to Survey Respondents

Positions liberal students might hold

- 1) The Silent Sam statue should be destroyed
- 2) University admissions should give preference to applicants from disadvantaged racial groups in order to help alleviate past injustices
- 3) Most undocumented/illegal immigrants should be granted amnesty and eventually equal rights as US citizens
- 4) A Christian wedding cake maker should be required to design cakes for same-sex weddings, even if the cake maker is opposed to same-sex marriage
- 5) The government has a responsibility to make sure every citizen has equal access to affordable health care

Positions conservative students might hold

- 6) The Silent Sam statue should be restored to its original location
- 7) Affirmative action should end, and an applicant's race should not carry any weight in university admissions
- 8) The United States should build a wall on its southern border to decrease undocumented/illegal immigration
- 9) Same-sex marriages should not be recognized as valid in the United States
- 10) There is no convincing evidence of human-caused global climate change

Note: Controversial positions were listed in a random order.



Tolerance Pt:

Table 16: Students' Responses to Objectionable Political View

Respondent is:	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
Write an opinion piece explaining the reasons for your disagreement and submit it to a campus publication.	88.6%	76.6%	84.7%
Ask a challenging question of a speaker who endorsed the idea.	90.3	79.9	86.2
Create an obstruction, such that a campus speaker endorsing this idea could not address an audience.	19.2	3.3	3.0
Form a picket line to block students from entering an event where a speaker will argue for this idea.	18.7	2.7	1.0
Write graffiti on the dorm room of a student who endorses this idea.	1.5	1.1	0.5
Write graffiti on the office of a faculty member who endorses this idea.	3.2	0.0	1.0
Yell profanity at a student who endorses this idea as he or she walks across campus.	3.5	0.0	0.5
Shove a student who endorses this idea when they are speaking about it outside on campus.	1.5	0.5	1.0
N	651	184	203

Note: Cell entries represent the proportion of respondents saying that it would be “appropriate” or “entirely appropriate” to take the specified action. The precise N varies slightly due to item nonresponse.

Outside speakers

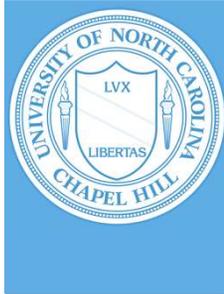


Table 17: Students' View of Campus Opportunities, by Respondent Ideology

Respondent is	Liberal			Moderate			Conservative		
	Too few	About right	Too many	Too few	About right	Too many	Too few	About right	Too many
Hear liberal perspectives	21.5%	71.6%	6.9%	10.4%	57.9%	31.7%	9.9%	31.5%	58.6%
Hear conservative perspectives	37.4	47.1	15.5	63.4	33.9	2.7	91.6	7.9	0.5
Engage with disagreement	58.0	40.0	2.5	61.8	36.0	3.3	75.9	22.2	2.0

Note: Response options were, “Far too few opportunities,” “Somewhat too few opportunities,” “About the right number of opportunities,” “Somewhat too many opportunities,” and “Far too many opportunities.” For simplicity, the table above collapses together students who said there were “somewhat” and “far” too many/few opportunities.



Table 3: How Often Does Politics Come Up?, by Subject Area

	Human- ities	Social Sciences	Health Sciences	Natural Sciences	Cultural Studies ³¹	Foreign Language
Never	20.7%	19.5%	55.6%	70.6%	0.0%	29.1%
Few	40.2	29.7	31.9	20.2	20.6	44.2
Week or two	13.8	15.1	2.8	2.9	20.6	12.8
Most meetings	12.6	11.4	6.9	3.6	23.5	9.3
Every	12.6	24.3	2.8	2.7	35.3	4.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.00	100.0
N	246	370	72	415	34	86