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Action: **Please see links below.**

[SAC Request](#)

[Message from Dr. Bradshaw](#)

[SAC Letter of Recognition](#)

Comments:

“Recently I received an e-mail outlining the new University guidelines for holiday celebrations. In the e-mail I was warned not to display Christmas decorations outside my “personal space”. This decision is very bad for employee morale, which by the way, is already at a record low. I feel this university has more important problems and issues we should be paying attention to, such as curtailing the scandalous ways some are behaving, the indecent contract payout that reward bad behavior, gender discrimination lawsuits and other problems. Our reputation has suffered enough and the community is watching what is going on here. If this isn’t bad enough, a new wave of secular humanist hysteria has hit our campus, without taking into account that the University sits in an overwhelmingly traditional community and you may offend them. If we are to continue calling attention to ourselves why not instead make bold decisions to resolve real problems such as the dismal scores in critical thinking of our students, or find way to increase student retention and the hiring of a more diverse faculty.

Last time I checked Universities were supposed to be places where ideas were freely discussed and tolerance was not misconstrued for the tyranny of the few on the many.

FGCU don’t be a Grinch! Merry Christmas!”

“I find the recent ruling that no displays of the upcoming holidays are to be allowed anywhere in the public areas of campus to be completely out of line with what we are all about here at FGCU. We are supposed to be a family coming together and embracing each other’s history, culture and traditions. But no, now we have to hide our traditions for fear of upsetting the narrow-minded. In the past we have done a good job of allowing holiday displays that are both secular and inclusive. Why can't we continue with that tradition?

This is very disappointing.”

“I would like to take a second to say I am very upset at the fact that we cannot acknowledge our holidays, whether it be Hanukkah, Christmas, or Kwanza, or even Festivas. I think people celebrating these special times is an important way for us to not only experience but to also learn and be more educated about other beliefs and cultures. PLEASE HELP”

“Are you kidding me, we can't decorate for the holidays, what kind of place is this school being forced into????”

“I am pretty disappointed to hear that Christmas isn't going to be celebrated this year on campus. It's silly that because a few people have to be ignorant that they ruin it for everyone else. Put up a tree, a menorah, and whatever else anyone wants I can't understand what the big deal is. So much for the holiday season...”

“So now we really can't decorate for the holidays. Great way to boost morale and show appreciation to us staff. SAC I have never gone to you for help before so, this is a first.”

“I can't believe that we can't have holiday decorations. It makes our department so sterile. This is where we spend a great deal of time.”

“It is a shame that the holidays have to be sanitized because of a few individuals. Do we need to cancel the Cinco-de-mayo celebration we have each year? It seems as if we are being treated like small children or are being managed by small children. If everyone can not have something, then no one can. Why did we celebrate Halloween? Isn't that a paean ritual? Christmas is a religious holiday, but to many others, including local retailers, it is a commercial holiday.

Let's cancel thanksgiving as well while we are on the subject. Those students and faculty not from the US have no reason to celebrate this event and are being penalized. We are forcing our holidays and beliefs onto them by giving everyone the time off.

Why do we bend to a few complaints of individuals over the desires of the masses? Why do we need to be tolerant of all religions, sexes, races and nationalities, but those same groups and individuals do not need to be tolerant of me. Why do we fly the American flag, when it may cause discomfort to some of the foreign students, faculty, and staff here at FGCU? What is next, faculty and staff can not wear any clothes that depict Christmas scenes or specific holiday events? Do I need to put my Santa socks back in my sock drawer to never see the light of day at FGCU?

I remember when the interviews for the President's position were taking place and the concept of tradition kept coming up. Every candidate said they hoped to bring in something to the university that would become tradition, would become part of the culture. Somehow, as we remove traditions, we lose part of who we are. Is this the tradition the current administration wants to leave behind? They have kicked off the United Way campaign a few weeks ago. Many university resources have gone into putting the envelopes in everyone's mailbox and to send emails out soliciting their support. I am offended that we would use university resources to support various religious organizations that receive money from the United Way.

If it is the money that pays for the decorations, then let's as a university community take up donations and pay an outside firm to decorate for us.”

“Having been recently informed of the decision not to permit holiday decorations at the university, I can say that I am shocked and saddened. The holidays are a time to celebrate the seasons and have a lot more meaning to people other than religious ties. The celebration of the holidays and the sharing of traditions from one culture to another, all which can be shown in decorations would only positively contribute to the overall atmosphere of the university. Many of these kids are away from home and those being around familiar decorations and celebrations may make it easier for them to be away at this time of the year. In addition, shouldn't we be showing the community that we can come together and celebrate the season and the many holidays included rather than sending out the message to the community that we do not tolerate differences and therefore must ban all celebrations? I expect more from this university and hope that this decision will be overturned.”

“Regarding the banning of Christmas decorations on campus. This is absolutely absurd. Christmas is a HOLIDAY just like any other holiday. We are allowed to put up decorations for Easter, St.Patrick's Day,

Halloween, etc. There are several people who do not believe in those holidays, yet we can decorate for those days. If someone does not believe in Christmas because of their religion, they don't have to celebrate. But to ban an entire campus of people from decorating for the holiday is not fair. Why couldn't the Executive Committee makes this announcement? Why did they chicken out and make it the responsibility of the department heads? If you are going to put this kind of restriction campus wide, then you need to have specific guidelines and rules. They did not do that either. Why not take a vote campus wide and go with the majority vote? We don't even have a voice in the matter.”

“I would like to express my concern about the newly revealed policy regarding no holiday decorations in any common areas.

- 1) If this is a policy that the university truly embraces than a policy needs to be sent out in writing (to all faculty, staff, and students)- explaining why we cannot celebrate the holidays with decorations.
- 2) If the concern is diversity and making sure that the decorations that are put up are inclusive - then there are better ways to address that, than to simply take away and forbid holiday decorations.
- 3) With budget freezes/cuts - we as a staff/university have little to celebrate throughout the year - but the holidays are a time that we all look forward to getting together and decorating and honoring not only our own traditions - but those of others as well.

I feel that this is a poorly thought out policy and the impact it will have on morale should have been considered.”

“I feel that a holiday tree is not a religious sign, but a sign of celebration of winter. I feel that as long as a specific holiday is celebrated, all holidays are celebrated, it truly shows our own weaknesses at celebrating culture and tradition.”

“I believe that as a university we should be able to bring to expression any holidays. Our student population is very diverse and expression from their culture is needed. Jewish, Christians, Muslims or any other religion.”

“I am very saddened to hear that Holiday decorations will no longer be allowed in the common areas of FGCU. I feel that FGCU is a university that honors all groups of people and not allowing us to express ourselves during the Holiday season denies us the opportunity to show good will to one and all. This saddens me as a person and as a FGCU employee.”

“As a long standing member of the staff here at FGCU, I am upset that we have been told that we cannot decorate our offices for Christmas.

First of all, there has not been any written communication from the administration about this with an explanation as to why. How come some of the university staff know about this and some don't? When we first started here at FGCU, there was a decorated tree, we all gathered around the tree, sang carols and had punch and cookies. The university choir sang and the children from the daycare center entertained us. The Student Services plaza had white lights. Everyone enjoyed the holiday season! With all that is going on today with the economy, etc., I was looking forward to the Christmas season as a brightness to the gloom and doom. Since we spend much of our day here, it would have been nice to have decorations and Christmas music during our working day. I understand the need for diversity. I do not question what anyone else believes in and they are free to express that any way they wish. So then why can't I?

I guess I am looking for a reason for the lack of holiday spirit at FGCU. Can someone explain that to me? Thank you for listening.”

“The stance being taken by our decision makers regarding no seasonal decoration in our common areas is truly a missed opportunity. Why are we not supporting diversity, inclusion and appreciation for the human spirit? Here's a chance to promote understanding and awareness of our differences and not repress them. We can celebrate this holiday time by hanging decorations in our common areas that honor the essence of our multicultural beliefs and backgrounds- goodwill, joy, a wish for peace, charity, prosperity and a warm winter season. Let's value each other and remain open to valid discussion on this please. I ask that a forum be provided so we as a community can engage in civility around this issue. FGCU can cultivate a celebration of inclusion, especially during this time of year. Let's not miss an opportunity to broaden our knowledge, raise our awareness and investigate what we can do together to deepen our understanding. We set a standard and example for the surrounding community we impact so greatly. Let's raise the spirits of everyone who comes here to learn with us, work with us or supports us by simply displaying seasonal elements that show we honor, respect and celebrate with them as well.”

“I am concerned and disappointed with the administration's decision to ban Christmas decorations on campus. While I understand that decorations are allowed in personal spaces, which is not defined and ambiguous given a lack of a formal communication, such a "policy" nonetheless is completely opposite to what FGCU should be doing.

Instead of being seen as being exclusive of any holiday celebration, why not be inclusive? I do not pretend to know all the various holiday celebrations that may be, but if a person or persons wish to display elements of that in their workplace then what is the harm? If nobody is excluded, and all may participate in whatever celebrations their faith indicate, then why she we not share and learn from one another?

It is sad to say, but the University has regressed as an institution of higher learning as a result of this decision. Instead of sliding backwards through a fear based decision of political correctness, let's move forward in a bolder stroke of multi-belief, multi-cultural sharing and inclusiveness.”

“I disagree with the new "unwritten" policy regarding Christmas decorations on campus. Why are we stifling cultures and not embracing them. Let's welcome our differences and diversity, rather than shut them out. I'm shocked at how administration has handled this. Things are bad enough for society right now. We appreciate that administration gave us what they could for raises, but our daily morale on campus is important too. With limited time at home to celebrate the time of year and most of hours spent at work, it would be nice if we could honor what we, the staff, believe in. This ranks right up there with not allowing staff to wear "Proud to be an American" pins.”

“I was just informed of the new "policy" to not allow any holiday decorations in any public areas on campus. I would like to express my deep frustration with this decision. I find it interesting that we cannot decorate for any holiday during this season - including New Years. As an institution that exists for the students, aren't we to provide an atmosphere pleasing to the students? It does not seem to me that we are providing them with a sense of "home away from home" here on campus. This time of year is typically a very festive and entertaining season, but without the decorations that add to the overall holiday experience, I see campus being a dismal place to be.”

“I am very disappointed in the University's decision to not support holiday decorations that support Christmas. There is a fine line between the Christian theme behind Christmas and the spirit of goodwill and giving that Christmas represents, and there are many non-denominational decorations that are a part of Christmas, the colors green and red for instance, or the Christmas tree, that signify the spirit and

not a religious belief. In times of budget constraints and low morale, it is hard to see the University suppressing faculty and staff from something that represents joy.”

“This University wants to take Christ out of Christmas once again. We allow others to strip us of all our rights, we turn the other cheek and we become the silent majority. As for me being a woman of God, I have the right to speak out and voice my rights. This country was founded on Christian principles and we should not allow others to take away our rights. We went from "Merry Christmas and Happy New Year" to "Happy Holidays" and now we are to refer to on-campus Christmas events to "end of semester.”

The Christmas decorations I put up will convey a religious message and statement. The reason for this season is the celebration of the birth of Christ Jesus.

Who will hear the Christian voices crying out? Christians have been silent too long. Will Christians continue to allow the world to dictate our rights? We need to make a stand for Christ.

It is a joke as I looked at the display for the unfortunate children in Ben Hill Griffin's hall. It is a disgrace we do not have a Christmas tree to pull the children's names.”

“As another long-time member of the FGCU "family", I must also add my disappointment and surprise at the email that I received; this email stated, "FGCU must be careful in demonstrating that it does not endorse/support/favor any one particular religion. Therefore, no Christmas decorations in public areas of the University will be permitted this year and henceforth. This includes the outside of your office door. Obviously, if you want to wear an article of clothing or jewelry (sweater, tie, etc.) that recognizes the season, that is your right.”

Oh, really, now? I can remember when in the early days we had the door decorating contests. And now Campus Involvement had the "Holiday" Card Challenge event to which we were all invited to participate? So why the change now? And THANK YOU for letting me retain MY right to wear any clothing or jewelry that I wish to wear; am I really allowed to be out in "public places" wearing such possibly offending articles?

But a small amount of people now seem to be able to "express themselves" and they don't get hammered! Why all this political correctness? HOLIDAYS are meant to be enjoyed. I thought Universities were for freedom of expression; this is sounding Communistic to me!!! Our Country was founded by Judeo-Christian values; menorahs don't offend me, nor do anyone else's displays of WHATEVER their beliefs are, religious or not. I have just as much right to display my beliefs and spirit as others, and they have the right to look away if they do not agree just as I look away from things that I do not agree with or do not support. I thought we embraced diversity here; maybe I'm right embraced PAST TENSE. How sad.”

“Very upset that we are not able to celebrate Christmas with either decorations or music. The clock tower plays music @ noon and cannot play any Christmas music. We are told we can decorate our individual areas but cannot decorate the whole office. It's a simple pleasure we all have and now it's taken away. We can decorate for other holidays, why not this one? Our morale is at a low with the economy, lack of raises, etc. Please add the comment to the others you already have. Thank you.”

staff, faculty and students need some cheer and joy in the campus classrooms and offices. If the university is forbidding the Christmas holiday season from being celebrated, then ALL holidays need to be forbidden. Why were we able to decorate for and celebrate Halloween? I'd be willing to bet that some people find that holiday offensive. So we can offend some people but not others? If

we are no longer allowed to celebrate religious holidays, then we must stop participating in ALL religious events. That means clubs, social events, etc.. In a time when FGCU has more important things to worry about and address such as sexual harassment, gender inequalities and such... This is just plain absurd. What am I supposed to say to a customer when they ask me why the campus has absolutely no holiday decorations? I believe a campus-wide email should go out explaining why the university is denying all cultural holiday celebrations. Perhaps we need to bring the Union back. I believe so. I am embarrassed to be a part of this university if this is how close-minded we will be from now on. It's a real shame.”

“I think that this years' "silent" policy on Christmas decorations on campus in public spaces is not going to be well received by FGCU employees and frankly, who pushed for this and why? A few years ago there was a nixing of the annual lighting of the Christmas tree event, but I thought that it was solved by having trees in the Student Union decorated with FGCU memorabilia and Florida wildlife. Is that off limits now too? Are trees secular or religious symbols?

Many employees are confused on how the policy is being communicated (by word of mouth) and have become even further confused about what constitutes their private space -front of counter vs. back, windows, etc. It has now become unclear what is politically correct to do, wear, and say at work this season. For instance, can we put a tray of holiday cookies out next to the coffee pot for our office friends and guests? Is a poinsettia a religious symbol or a traditional winter flower? Celebrations that have previously been billed as Christmas celebrations will now be sterile, void of any seasonal names, reminders, music, or decorations because they are held in public spaces. When conducting research on the subject I found that 95% of the U.S. population celebrates Christmas in the secular or Christian tradition. For the 5% that don't - the majority are being offensive and should keep Christmas to themselves at work? Why not be all inclusive and include the 5% who may be feeling left out in with the 95% and welcome all expressions of the holiday season? Now instead of having one display per office, each individual will decorate their own office or cubicle and there will be many small and hidden displays. Do we really have to keep Christmas in the closet?”

“It's probably already been said, but FGCU Executives are wrong to take away our right to display Christmas decorations. Some employees' desks are in public spaces. That means they can't decorate at all. There are so many reasons why this is inappropriate and not one why it is appropriate. Extremely disappointed in FGCU!”

“Why can we not decorate for the Christmas/New Year's holiday period, but we can decorate for Halloween, 4th of July, and Easter? If the administration is to make a decision to not allow holiday decorations, they should ban all holidays - not just pick and choose them. However, if they do this, I cannot imagine the morale of the students, faculty, and staff will be very high. Yes we are a place of education, but we are also a second home to everyone who is on this campus on a regular basis. Most of us spend more time on campus and in our offices than at home with our families. Why take away that small part of happiness we can provide to others?”

“Dear Staff Advisory Council, I am curious as to how the decision to ban all holiday decorations came about. I am also very interested in why the decision was not announced and shared by the Executive

Committee, but rather by supervisors. This is a very pathetic way to make such an announcement that affects all of campus. Of course, I would probably want to avoid making such an announcement as well knowing that it will upset many people.”

“So, if we cannot decorate for the holidays in any common area on campus, does that mean that the children in the Family Resource Center will not be allowed to have up a tree or decorations? How sad to deprive the children of the excitement of this holiday season. I'll let the Executive Committee tell the children this.....”

“In our Guiding Principles, it states: "The University vigorously protects freedom of inquiry and expression and categorically expects civility and mutual respect to be practiced in all deliberations." Interesting that suddenly our "vigorously protected freedoms" have been vigorously banned...”

“Guiding principle #3 - Diversity is a source of renewal and vitality. The University is committed to developing capacities for living together in a democracy whose hallmark is individual, social, cultural, and intellectual diversity. It fosters a climate and models a condition of openness in which students, faculty, and staff engage multiplicity and difference with tolerance and equity. Tolerance????? Obviously we need to relook at the guiding principles of the University - banning holiday decorations shows NO tolerance.”

“Last guiding principle: Assessment of all functions is necessary for improvement and continual renewal. The University is committed to accounting for its effectiveness through the use of comprehensive and systematic assessment. Tradition is challenged; the status-quo is questioned; change is implemented. That's right - make FGCU "Vanilla!" How disappointing that we cannot even celebrate traditions of the world.”

“It is one thing to try to keep "Christ" out of Christmas (although I personally disagree) but it is absurd to try to force "celebration" out of the holiday season. I find the imposition of this policy demeaning and offensive. Whose idea was this anyway? I keep hearing about the promotion of diversity on campus and have always felt pride in that. Not so much anymore. Please do not diminish our holiday spirit. Please allow us to celebrate together rather than dividing administration and staff and depriving our students of some holiday traditions.”

“I am writing to express my disappointment and frustration concerning the ban on Christmas decorations. I believe that those who decided on this mandate are tip-toeing around everyone's feelings or possibility of offense. This would not be an issue if we called it Xmas decorations! The word Christmas certainly has the name of Christ in it, but it is NOT a form of one's beliefs being forced down the throat of others. In fact, most Christmas decorations (trees, bows, Santa Claus, gift-giving, etc.) have nothing to do with the birth of Jesus Christ, but celebrate family and friendship. To me, tolerance and diversity mean listening to and respecting ALL (including Christian) religious beliefs. It does not place one group's concerns above another. I know that I would be glad to learn more about other culture's holiday celebrations and would not be offended to see a menorah, for instance, as a symbol of celebration. If we are to be concerned about each other, we can celebrate in openness, honesty and a thirst for learning. Furthermore, this great country was founded on the principles of freedom of religious beliefs, openness in expression of opinion and freedom from the fear of speaking one's mind. This ban is a step backwards. I, too, have the right to express and celebrate the joy of the birth of Christ without fear of retribution from any one person or group.”

"I wonder why the Administration waited to be so close to the Season to send the memo? The memo states "that they are legal limitations regarding the matter" but does not states what they are???

Why we need to wait until 2009 to discuss these issues and make recommendations? I am thinking that the issue is now on the table, and this was not an issue until several days ago???

I wonder why does "legal limitations" were not in place for 11 years, and I am grateful that the previous Administration had an open mind about Celebrations."

"Twas a month before Christmas at ol' FGCU, when the big words came down, "No Christmas for you"! The staff was perplexed, amazed & worried, so right off to SAC they ran and they scurried. Some staff didn't know, hadn't heard the bad news, while others were fuming and spreading the news. I in my "space" having just outlined my plans, had already decided where my big tree would stand. When what to my wondering ears should I hear, Christmas had been nixed at FGCU this year! As the stillness was broken, more people found out. Not by decree but by word of mouth. No Christmas, No Holly, No Wreaths to display. No Happiness, No Folly, not this year No Way! Not in Hallways, not in Public, just your private place. Now dash your joy, dash your hopes, clean up your space. I thought about Christmas and the joy that it brings, and wondered what happened to change all these things? And just when I thought Christmas might be restored, an email was sent that simply closed that door.

So to all who love Christmas and all its delights, Merry Christmas to you, and Silent Night."

"Thank you for all the comments before this one!

It is good to see people outraged about this new rule. It's time to stand up and be counted.

What does diversity stand for at FGCU? It appears to be intolerance for a Christian holiday which has been celebrated worldwide for centuries."

"A few years ago my family had the chance to visit Russia as an ice skating/hockey cultural exchange program. While in Russia my children commented on how the Russian people were afraid to worship out in the open, they kept everything religious hidden in the back of closets. We explained to them that in America no one should be ashamed to practice their religious beliefs. While I do believe that Christmas is a Christian holiday, it has become more and more a time for family celebration, helping others less fortunate and wishing good will to all! What a wonderful for all to experience - well, not at FGCU! We have taken huge steps backwards. Do any of you remember the tree lighting ceremony, where our University President lit the Holiday Tree and the children from the Family Resource center came out and sang Christmas Carols? I do! It was wonderful!!!

Please reconsider the ban on Holiday Decorations!!!!

Thank you."

"I agree with the comments posted above. There are many nationalities and religions represented on this campus between faculty/staff and students. Our goal as an institution should be to provide learning, appreciation and acceptance of the world's diversity. This would be a learning experience for all and isn't that the University's goal-education? Also, if we celebrate Halloween, how can we possibly ban other holidays?"

"I am concerned and disappointed with the administration's decision to ban decorations this holiday season. This was a great opportunity for all of FGCU to embrace diversity throughout campus, for

others to learn more about all the holidays that encompass this season and to support their fellow workers in these difficult economic times.

The university could have been more inclusive and shown support for all of the holidays. If everyone was invited to celebrate, and all holidays were included, we could all share and learn from one another; this way everyone could have enjoyed this holiday season instead of being disappointed and upset.”

“THE 2008 HOLIDAY CONCERT - BY BOWER SCHOOL OF MUSIC Just was in the hall of our building and saw Christmas signs advertising The 2008 Holiday Concert. This concert is to be held on campus property - displayed for others to view. The service learning department had to revise their giving tree because it represented the holiday (for children who without the support of the university may not have a holiday). Should the concert be an end of term concert with not holiday music as stated in the previous emails we received?”

“I am very disappointed in the recent ban of holiday decorations on FGCU. It demonstrates the weak leadership that is coming from the very top of the administration.

The real tragedy of this situation is the bowing down to political correctness when a FEW individuals may feel offended by the holiday displays. And I am sure for the many that want to participate in some form of celebratory decoration and university fund usage was an issue, the creative people would come together and make it happen anyway.

Perhaps the individuals that do NOT want any decorations are not familiar with the history of neither Christmas nor our great country.

To quote James Madison:

"We have staked the whole future of American civilization, not upon the power of government, far from it. We've staked the future of all our political institutions upon our capacity to sustain ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God."

[1778 to the General Assembly of the State of Virginia] James Madison

The USA, for those that have not read the history of this great nation, was founded by God-fearing Christians all well-versed in the Judeo-Christian traditions. And the foundation was one of inclusivity - NOT EXCLUSION! The Constitution's First Amendment guarantees our freedom of expression. Bill Ayers can step on the American flag but we make a decision to ban holiday decorations - what message are we giving to young people? Instead of celebrating the Joy of the Christmas Season and bringing people of all ages and nations together, we bow down to being politically correct.

The University has missed an excellent opportunity to reach out to the student body as well as all our local communities in the Spirit of the Holiday called Christmas. What about the students that can't be with their families at Christmas? FGCU is their "extended" family. This IS the spirit of Christmas.

In closing I would like to remind everyone: "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." E. Burke

I ask the good persons in this Administration to stand up for the tradition of "Good will towards all" or perhaps the few that do not believe in this Christian holiday should come to work on Dec. 25!"

“What exactly are these "legal limitations"? I would like to see them in writing. How do other public institutions recognize the holidays? Why could we decorate for the holidays a couple years ago but suddenly it's not okay? This is really sad.....”

“I am so disappointed in this University over the recent changes regarding the decorations. This school is sinking fast. This is just this type of actions that promote hate between groups of people, not the opposite as these administrators intend. What’s better, to "offend" a few by saying "Merry Christmas" or offend a LOT more by saying you can’t? Did the administration take into account the feelings or thoughts of others.”

“I wanted to comment on the letter from Dr. Bradshaw lifting the ban on holiday decorations in the common areas. Well done sir!

Your commitment and concern is evident and this staff member is heartened to know we are indeed a valuable voice within our FGCU community.

Thank you to the Staff Advisory Council for their true representation and diligence in bringing the staff concerns forward in such a timely manner. Happy Holidays everyone!”