

# Free speech under attack at NYU: IYSSE appeals second rejection of club status

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On March 6, the New York University's Student Activities Board (SAB) informed the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) that the university was denying the group's application for club status without listing a single reason for its decision. The decision puts the IYSSE in a Kafkaesque situation where it will "appeal" the decision without being told why they were rejected.

The IYSSE submitted its appeal on Wednesday, writing:

"The IYSSE is opposed to the current club application process, an arbitrary and capricious framework that denies club status to roughly 90 percent of applicants and functions to limit political and social activity on campus."

In its appeal, the IYSSE rejected the current application process—more fitting for an ancient monarchy—in which the SAB censors political speech by determining whether groups are "unique" enough to merit club status.

This is the second time in consecutive semesters that NYU and the SAB have blocked the IYSSE from club status, despite the fact that the IYSSE satisfied all requirements both times. Last semester, the school denied the IYSSE using fraudulent arguments that the school had insufficient support to sustain a club on campus, that the IYSSE was insufficiently different from other organizations on campus like the International Socialist Organization (ISO), and that the university lacked funding for new clubs on campus.

The IYSSE refuted each of these arguments.

The IYSSE proved its staying power last semester by launching an intensive campaign in opposition to NYU's draconian club application process. The IYSSE held a demonstration opposing Trump's anti-immigration policies, and a large public meeting

attended by over 40 students and workers. It submitted over 400 student signatures and received numerous statements of support from NYU faculty, including Professor Bertell Ollman.

The ISO club at NYU also responded to an open letter from the IYSSE and acknowledged that the two groups were distinct political tendencies that they support the IYSSE's "right to have a club at NYU."

In addition, the IYSSE has written extensively on the close connections between NYU, Wall Street, and the military-intelligence complex, disproving the lie that the wealthy elite university does not have enough money to support more student clubs.

The IYSSE appeal notes that the SAB decision violates the university's own protocols. The University Policy for Academic Integrity requires the school "create a campus climate that encourages the free exchange of ideas, promotes scholarly excellence through active and creative thought, and allows community members to achieve and be recognized for achieving their highest potential."

As the appeal noted, "It is impossible to reconcile these standards and principles with the way IYSSE members have been treated."

The IYSSE appeal pointed out that many SAB members boast of their connections to the Democratic Party and their aspiration for Wall Street careers on Facebook.

"Inasmuch as several members of the SAB, as evidenced by their Facebook pages, are active in Democratic and Republican politics, their objectivity is subject to question." Further, the IYSSE wrote that "it should go without saying that our academic freedom includes the right to present and discuss ideas that some SAB members may disagree with."

Many NYU students that support the IYSSE's right

to club status were shocked by the SAB's recent decision to reject the IYSSE.

Donald Jr., a physics student stated, "I'm mystified by the rejection, because it is so clear that this group has a following. The IYSSE is, if anything, underrepresented at the school.

"I would like to see what other groups were rejected, were any of them also in opposition to the Democratic Party. I prided myself on the university being non-sectarian, and I would be alarmed by the university having such strong political leanings. Every student group should be able to exist under the umbrella of NYU."

Asked about his thoughts on academic freedom given the current political climate, he added, "Personally, the rise of Trump has made me more interested in foreign policy. The physics students' lounge is teeming with political discussion, and there is more interest in politics in 2017 than there was in 2016.

"I'm seeking to learn, and have more discussion. Now is a horrible time to be shutting down political groups because so many people are being politicized."

Arran Walshe, a PhD student, said, "It doesn't seem that there is any reason for the IYSSE not to be given club status. The university has a mandate for helping facilitate discussion, and the IYSSE has demonstrated that it has support on campus. I don't understand what the possible reasoning could be.

"As a newcomer to this country, I had assumptions about the state of political dialogue in the US. My wish was for these views to be disproven, but these kinds of actions confirm them. The [SAB's] claims that this group's views are already expressed on campus reflect their bias. Who can really argue against a robust diversity of political viewpoints on campus?"

When an IYSSE member pointed out that the ISO has openly stated that they have major differences with the IYSSE, Walshe added, "That is telling. Even when the SAB is disproven they still don't reverse their decision.

"I have some experience with university politics, and I've seen how it works. It looks like they just come up with an excuse retroactively. They probably know their decision is baseless, but they use it anyway.

"Honestly, every group deserves a clear elaboration of the guidelines. As it stands it looks like they have vague guidelines, and it is putting you in a Kafkaesque position."



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