“A university should be a place for free speech”

New York University students denounce decision to deny IYSSE club status

Our reporters
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Over the weekend, the New York University Student Activities Board (SAB) rejected the International Youth and Students for Social Equality’s appeal for club status. On Monday, IYSSE members campaigned on campus and talked to students about the political issues raised by the university’s attack on democratic rights.

As part of the IYSSE’s spring application, the group met or exceeded all stated requirements for club applications, including gathering over 400 signatures from NYU students, holding meetings, and received numerous statements of support from NYU faculty.

The application was denied early in March, and this past weekend the SAB sent a perfunctory email denying the IYSSE’s appeal of this decision. SAB Vice Chair of Development Julie Corbett reiterated the claim that the IYSSE would not be “sustainable” and that NYU—which is the wealthiest landowner in New York City—lacked resources to accept most club applicants.

Corbett had earlier refused to supply the IYSSE with evidence that the SAB’s members, many of whom have campaigned for Democratic Party politicians, were not biased against the IYSSE.

The IYSSE spoke to students about the club application process, the corporatization of New York University and the broader political issues facing workers and young people in the US and internationally.

Fabi, a student at NYU Tisch School of Arts, said, “I don’t think it’s just NYU, but all universities in this country are for profit. They are putting forward a liberal, and I really mean neoliberal, ideology. Every freedom in the US is curtailed, and it is not acceptable to have a viewpoint even a little bit to the left.”

After some discussion with an IYSSE member about SAB members’ connections to the Democratic Party, Fabi added, “There is a conflict of interest here, and they [the SAB] do not want to show it. The Democrats don’t do anything for democracy in this country. The problem is throughout this country, but this is its reflection here.”

Taylor, an art history student, said about the SAB’s decision to block the IYSSE, “It is ridiculous. They didn’t provide any reasoning except that the school lacks funding, and that is laughable.

“I don’t think any group should be censored.”

Caroline, who majors in Irish studies, said, “If you submitted 400 signatures then you should be recognized. I know there are clubs with three people in them, and they are fine. It seems there is a bias against you.”

Pedro, a public policy major, said, “I think the introduction of this club would allow for more viewpoints in the political conversation at NYU. NYU is supposed to have a variety of views, and I thought that was the reason that we are an international university. We are supposed to be a melting pot of ideas.”

Asked his thoughts about the SAB’s claim that the IYSSE is not sustainable, he responded, “If you submitted 400 signatures with the application then they are just ignorant to the facts.”

Amy Jung, who is majoring in global public health, said, “There are so many things here that are reasons why they [the SAB] should accept you. It is like no matter what point you make, they will have an excuse to reject you.”

J.D., a music student, when told that the SAB rejects

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of 90 percent of the clubs that apply, said, “As long as it’s not directly marginalizing a certain group of people, there should be no reason to reject a club. Especially during tense political times, a university should be a place for free speech. The voice of the people paying for their education at NYU is silenced.”

Ryan, a master’s student in media culture and communications, said, “There seems to be a trend toward censorship in higher education. I heard about something similar happening at Fordham with Students for Justice in Palestine [they were denied club status in February].”

When asked about the SAB’s claim that they are limited by financial resources, Ryan said, “That’s a lie. NYU is a giant institution run like a corporation.”

Lewis, an international relations student from France, said about the SAB denying the IYSSE club status, “It’s surprising. We pay to go to school here. I’m sure they have plenty of money. We paid, and we should have the right to hold meetings about whatever we want.”

After some broader political discussion, he added, “I’m worried about the French elections. If [National Front presidential candidate Marine] Le Pen is elected, I’m sure this will happen at French universities.”

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