

**AAUP, IU-Bloomington Chapter, Statement on the Termination of
the Director of Student Media and *IDS* Print Editions**

The IUB chapter of the AAUP strongly condemns the firing of the Director of Student Media Jim Rodenbush and the termination of the print edition of the *Indiana Daily Student (IDS)*, an independent, student-run newspaper published since 1867. In a clear attempt at media censorship, Rodenbush was told in meetings over a series of weeks to inform *IDS* staff that they were to include no news in their Homecoming issue not directly relevant to homecoming. When Rodenbush refused, citing concerns about a violation of First Amendment freedom of the press, he was terminated on October 14th.

In response, the editors of the *IDS* issued an open letter protesting the firing, stating that the direction to print no news in the Homecoming edition constituted “an order blatantly in defiance of our editorial independence and the *Student Media Charter*.” Less than 24 hours later, on October 15th, Indiana University ended all print publication of the *IDS*. It is unclear whether that action was simply an attempt to stop the publication of news critical of IU administration that would be seen by students and alumni at homecoming, or an act of retribution by the Administration in response to the strong and independent stance taken by the *IDS*. Either way, both this action and the Rodenbush firing constitute a clear violation of First Amendment protections of freedom of the press, and further deteriorate IU’s commitment to free speech.

Both actions were rationalized by IU Administration as a response to the financial deficits of the paper. But as legal experts reviewing the case have noted, financial condition is in no way a sufficient excuse for the blatant violation of First Amendment rights. And terminating the print publication *only* when the Editors in Chief refused to cower to censorship suggests financial problems were not the reason.

Yet Rodenbush’s termination letter, citing his lack of “alignment with the University’s direction” does unfortunately reflect a hard truth. This Administration has attempted to block constitutionally protected free speech rights after 11 pm; terminated international faculty without due process; sanctioned one professor due to an anonymous complaint without due process; and silenced the voices supporting marginalized populations through a complete erasure of diversity, equity and inclusion from its offices, programs and websites. As a result, Indiana University has been named the worst public higher education institution for free speech in the nation by the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE).

In refusing to be cowed by demands to voluntarily abrogate constitutionally protected rights, Director Rodenbush and the *Indiana Daily Student* have indeed shown themselves out of alignment with a University Administration that has consistently silenced dissenting voices with a seeming disregard for First Amendment protections.

As representatives of Indiana University's faculty, and in support of the principles and values crucial to our educational mission, the IUB chapter of the AAUP stands in solidarity with Jim Rodenbush and with the staff of the *Indiana Daily Student* in their defense of the First Amendment. We urge IU Administrators to reconsider these unconstitutional actions that serve only to corrode Indiana University's standing as a credible research institution, and further diminish the value of the education our students are receiving.