

NEWS

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Zywicki draws fire for remarks

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Dartmouth Trustee Todd Zywicki '88 called former College President James Freedman "truly evil" and expressed disdain for an alleged academic orthodoxy of political correctness in a recently surfaced Oct. 27 speech at the John William Pope Center, a conservative higher education think tank.

It is unclear whether Zywicki's comments represent a violation of the trustees' oath of office, although the Board of Trustees Chairman Ed Haldeman '70 said he was "surprised and disappointed" by Zywicki's comments, and suggested that Zywicki's actions may be added to the agenda for discussion at the trustees' next meeting.

The address, a video of which was made available on the Pope Center's website, has garnered attention from Ivy League-specific blogs and websites and has circulated widely among alumni by e-mail.

In an interview with The Dartmouth, Zywicki said that he was unaware at the time of his speech that his comments would be made publicly available on the Internet.

"I didn't know that they were recording," he said. "Typically if they are recording something, you sign a waiver ahead of time, and I don't recall signing anything. Obviously, I would have been more careful in the way I said things if I had known they were going to be broadcast outside the context of the academic setting I was in."

The Pope Center did not return requests for comment by press time.

Criticism of the speech has centered on Zywicki's description of Freedman, which Zywicki made while discussing his path to the Board of Trustees. Freedman passed away in March 2006 and was president of the College from 1987 to 1998.

"They then brought in this fellow, truly evil man, James Freedman, who basically, simply put, his agenda was to turn Dartmouth into Harvard," Zywicki said in his Oct. 27 address.

Zywicki said he stands by his criticism of Freedman, whose presidency overlapped with Zywicki's time at

Dartmouth.

“In my view it is unforgiveable and there is never ever any excuse for a president of the College or a senior College official to do to undergraduate students what James Freedman did when he was president,” Zywicki said in an interview. “It is unforgiveable to try to intimidate [students] and throw around reckless and baseless charges of anti-Semitism in the way he did.”

Zywicki explained that his characterization of Freedman draws from essays by former Dartmouth Professor Jeffrey Hart and conservative columnist William Buckley about an episode in 1990 when a College student inserted a line from Adolf Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* into the masthead of *The Dartmouth Review*. The incident, which occurred on the day prior to the Jewish holiday Yom Kippur, garnered widespread national attention, including denunciations of *The Review* by members of Congress and an October “Dartmouth United Against Hate” rally.

Freedman, in an address at the rally, said, “For 10 years *The Dartmouth Review* has consistently attacked blacks because they are blacks, women because they are women, homosexuals because they are homosexuals, and Jews because they are Jews.”

Both Buckley and Hart have written that Freedman himself was responsible for propagating the impression that there might be anti-Semitism at Dartmouth by suggesting it was more prevalent than it was in actuality.

The controversy surrounding Zywicki’s speech was not limited to his discussion of Freedman.

In his address, Zywicki also said, “And I think what you have to understand is that those who control the university today, they don’t believe in God and they don’t believe in country.”

Of the many statements he made in his speech, this is the only case in which Zywicki said that he “plainly misspoke” and “did not mean for it to be taken literally.”

The majority of Zywicki’s speech, however, centered on his assertion that political correctness has become a new “orthodoxy” in academia.

“The new dogma is environmentalism and feminism and that is the dogma and they will enforce it viciously,” Zywicki said in his address.

Zywicki, both in his speech and in an interview with *The Dartmouth*, pointed to the resignation of Harvard University President Larry Summers as proof of this new orthodoxy of political correctness. While several factors contributed to Summers’ resignation, including his relationship with the Harvard faculty,

Summers was most strongly criticized for a speech that some interpreted as suggesting that men, as opposed to women, are naturally more proficient in the sciences.

“What I think is crucial is that people should be allowed to propose controversial ideas and hypotheses,” Zywicki told The Dartmouth, “I believe communism is an extraordinarily morally bankrupt system, but certainly people should be allowed to teach it.”

Zywicki was originally elected to the Board of Trustees by petition in 2004 and is known to have met with the Phrygian Society, a secret organization of senior men that opposes the College’s current administration.

Haldeman refused to comment on whether Zywicki’s statements violate the trustee’s oath, an agreement on the set of responsibilities and guidelines trustees must follow, explaining that it “is an issue the board has not addressed.”

“Because it might be an agenda item [the board] might be dealing with, I should not speak to my view until the entire board has gotten together,” Haldeman said, adding later, “I was very surprised and disappointed by [Zywicki’s] characterization of President Freedman as a ‘truly evil man.’ President Freedman was a brilliant man who worked incredibly hard to make Dartmouth a stronger institution.”