

Stanford University Law Students Issues Apology After Creating Chaos During Judge's Speech



Stanford University officials apologized to a federal judge after law students disrupted his appearance on campus last week. Fifth US Circuit Judge Stuart Kyle Duncan was visiting the Palo Alto law school to speak at an event for the campus chapter of the conservative Federalist Society when student protesters derailed the event. In a letter sent on Saturday, Stanford president Marc Tessier-Lavigne and law dean Jenny Martinez apologized for Judge Duncan's experience while visiting the campus and acknowledged that what happened was inconsistent with the university's policies on free speech.

The disruption was caused by a group of students who claimed that Judge Duncan's positions threatened the rights of LGBTQ people, immigrants, Black voters, women, and others. Video clips of the event show Judge Duncan struggling to speak over the protesters' shouts while also refusing to answer some of their questions and criticizing them. In one clip, Judge Duncan says, "In this school, the inmates have gotten control of the asylum."

The incident has caused controversy, with some saying that the student's actions were disrespectful and undermined the principles of free speech that universities are meant to uphold. Others argue that the students exercised their right to accessible speech by protesting Judge Duncan's appearance and challenging his views.

In response to the incident, Judge Duncan called on the school to apologize for his treatment, saying that the student protesters were "idiots" and "bullies." He also said he felt attacked by Tirien Steinbach, the law school's associate dean for diversity, equity, and inclusion, who addressed Judge Duncan and students during the event. Steinbach echoed protesters' concerns about Judge Duncan's advocacy and judicial opinions while clarifying his right to speak at the school.

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In a statement to the conservative National Review, Judge Duncan said he appreciated the apology from Stanford and the acknowledgment that the law school's staff failed to enforce its free speech policies. He also criticized the behavior of the school's administrators, saying it was entirely at odds with the law school's mission of training future members of the bench and bar.

While the incident has sparked debate about the limits of free speech and the appropriate ways to express dissent, it has also raised questions about the role of universities in facilitating productive dialogue and protecting the rights of all students and speakers. Some argue that universities are responsible for promoting free speech and open inquiry, even when it means allowing controversial or unpopular views to be expressed. Others say that universities must also consider marginalized groups' perspectives and experiences and work to ensure that all students feel safe and valued on campus.

Regardless of where one stands on these issues, it is clear that the incident at Stanford has raised important questions about the role of universities in shaping public discourse and promoting democratic values. As universities continue to grapple with these questions, they must remain committed to the principles of free speech, academic freedom, and inclusivity, even in the face of controversy and opposition.