

NEWS

Section Editor: Emma Alexander
nalexand@unca.edu



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Brown Hall is one of the free speech zones on campus.

Photo by Makeda Sandford - Layout & Design Editor

Free speech zones questioned

JASON PERRY

A&F Staff Writer
jperry1@unca.edu

The First Amendment guarantees citizens the right to freedom of speech.

This guarantee is being questioned at UNC Asheville.

"It alarms me that there is a free speech zone at all," said Diana Kruk, vice chair of Move to Amend, with her voice raised and fist in the air. "I feel like a university campus should be a bastion of free thinking, free speech and free association, and by establishing a free speech zone you eliminate that."

UNCA has one free speech zone where visitors are able to protest outside Brown Hall, at Reid's Plaza. Protesting outside the free speech zone is not permitted.

Kruk said she thinks having a free speech zone takes away people's First Amendment rights. She thinks people should have a right to protest anywhere

on campus.

"When you criminalize free thinking, free speech and free association by making anything outside those parameters, it's incredibly detrimental to society at large," Kruk said. "When you do that at a college campus I think it is incredibly detrimental to the entire process of higher learning."

Eric Boyce, UNCA chief of police, said he wants protesters' voices to be heard, but he runs into problems when protests impede campus activities.

"That is not just for on campus, but anywhere, and that is important for folks who are organizing protests," Boyce said. "When you start running into problems is where you are in front of Bank of America, and not letting customers come in."

Kruk said the system will take care of itself. She said a couple of people protesting would not affect campus activity.

"If there are four people who

"The windows are thick enough to drown out four people. But if it is a situation where enough people get riled up about it, then it should be listened to."

Diana Kruk

are trying to be disruptive they are not going to be given much credence," Kruk said. "They are not going to be that disruptive."

Kruk said that if enough people are behind an issue, then the issue deserves to be heard.

"The windows are thick enough to drown out four people," Kruk said. "But if it is a situation where enough people get riled up about it, then it should be listened to."

Gray McDiarmid, senior biology student from Greensboro,

said the free speech zone is necessary but should be expanded.

"I really would like to see the freedom of speech on campus to include the entire campus," said McDiarmid, while protesting for smokers' rights. "I do understand the need for a designated protest zone for people coming outside of campus, because we do get a lot of anti-abortion people, with their big graphic images."

McDiarmid said he has experience protesting outside of the free speech zone, but was redirected to Reid's Plaza. He said he did not receive any harassment from campus police.

"They are polite police officers," said McDiarmid, with a grin.

Sophie Silver-Isenstadt, a former UNCA student, said regulating the free speech zone is a good idea.

Silver-Isenstadt said there should be more areas besides Reid's Plaza. *Read more on page 7*

Have a news tip?
Send to jshephe3@unca.edu

The Blue Banner is UNC Asheville's student newspaper. We publish each Wednesday except during summer sessions, finals week and holiday breaks. Our office is located in Karpen Hall 019.

The Blue Banner is a designated forum for free speech and welcomes letters to the editor, considering them on basis of interest, space and timeliness. Letters and articles should be emailed to the editor-in-chief or the appropriate section editor.

Letters should include the writer's name, year in school, and major or other relationship to UNCA. Include a telephone number to aid in verification. All articles are subject to editing.