

Statement of the Executive Council of the College Senate

On Richard Spencer's Presence in Gainesville

October 18th, 2017

The essence of democracy is equal power of voice—no one voice should be more powerful than another. In the spirit of democracy, higher education is the free exchange of ideas. All ideas, no matter how wise or ignorant, how compassionate or toxic, how loving or dehumanizing, are permitted to enter the discussion. Santa Fe College Senate upholds without hesitation the right to free speech and the right to protest. No idea, in and of itself, is a crime. A speaker is free to express violent ideas, but, as one cannot shout “fire” in a theater, one cannot incite violence. And without waiver, violence is not a mode of speech, and we condemn it unequivocally. Instead of violence, we encourage everyone to vote.

As an institution of higher education, we foster civil discourse. At Santa Fe College, we challenge ideas, while we give every voice respect and dignity. Some ideas are more valuable than others, but no one person is more or less human than another. Civil discourse requires a recognition that all people are fed with the same food, are subject to the same diseases, and are cured by the same medicine, no matter the disagreement. All forms of bigotry—racist, sexist, classist—begin at the inability to see the other in the self. But if people want to express the ideas and emotions underlying categories of hate, we ask that they subdue their rage in the interest of civil debate. Likewise, people who challenge the worst of hatred should do so with calm and compassion.

Santa Fe College Senate finds Mr. Spencer’s anti-egalitarian views counter to the values our institution holds. Our institution finds that everyone is valuable for the sure fact of being human, and that the value of human life supersedes anything else. We do indeed worry about what could befall our community, so we would like to share one idea. Every atrocity, every injustice, every crime against the human spirit would be prevented if enough people were willing to see their common humanity instead of violently defending their differences. Please move forward with your heart free of hatred and despair.

Approved by the Executive Council for the College Senate October 18, 2017

Art Grant – Presiding Officer