Daily Opinion

The Daily Campus

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Editorial

Why the media shouldn't cave to the FCC



Brenden Carr, chairman of the Federal Communications Commission. The FCC has put out statements leading a wave of self-censorship by broadcasters.

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On Feb. 17, Stephen Colbert was intending to conduct an interview on "The Late Show" with James Talarico, a Democratic candidate for one of Texas' Senate seats. Before the show aired however, Colbert received word from CBS that the interview could not go on. Ostensibly, CBS' refusal to air the interview was due to new guidelines from the Federal Communications Commission about the "equal time" rule, which requires networks to give candidates running for political office an equal amount of time on the airwaves. This incident sets a dangerous precedent for how media companies may interact with the Trump administration, continuing a damaging trend of self-censorship. The Editorial Board believes that this self-censorship under government pressure is detrimental to press freedom and editorial independence.

To examine CBS' decision, we must first dig into the legal underpinnings of "equal time." The rule was established in the Radio Act of 1927, when radio was the dominant medium of airwaves. The equal time rule means that if a political candidate received airtime on a network, other candidates could legally ask for a similar amount of time on that network. The rule was supposed to ensure that all candidates were given a fair shake in the new media environment. But there were problems with the rigidity of the law, and in 1959, Congress carved out several exceptions from the rule. These exceptions included documentaries, breaking news coverage and bona fide news interviews. For decades, talk show programs such as "The Late Show" were considered part of this bona fide category by the FCC.

Trump's FCC, led by Chairman Brendan Carr, has recently upended these guidelines. On Jan. 21, the FCC released a public notice that the agency "has not been presented with any evidence that the interview portion of any late night or daytime television talk show program on air presently would qualify" for bona fide status. It's important to note that this notice, which runs contrary to longstanding precedent, did not fully state that programs like "The Late Show" would lose their exception. Instead, it left media companies to fill in the gaps.

When CBS banned Colbert from having Talarico on his show, even preventing the candidate's picture from being shown onscreen, it set an example that corporations would gladly take over where the FCC left off. Rather than risk incurring the wrath of Carr's agency, CBS' lawyers chose to avoid the issue altogether and censor one of their own programs.

Self-censorship has the potential for great harm to the media landscape. One facet of this harm is an increasing inability to hold the government accountable. CBS is no stranger to this. In December of 2025, the network abruptly pulled a "60 Minutes" segment detailing abuse allegations at CECOT, an El Salvadoran prison that Trump sent migrants to. Sharyn Alfonsi, correspondent for the story, blasted the decision as a "political" calculation. Even though it aired a month later, initially pulling the story meant that CBS stopped itself from being a watchdog. If other media outlets follow suit, it is likely that less abuse in government will be exposed.

Another issue lies in the federal government's newfound sense of power over the media. Carr did not have to enforce his new guidelines or make a ruling on whether CBS violated the equal time rule, because CBS did the hard work for him. Given the network's self-censorship, the FCC knows they might only have to make a threat rather than act on it. The implication of government pressure is what led to CBS' decision-making. Now that its new guidance and political pressure have been legitimized, the FCC has continued its censorship crusade, opening a probe into ABC's daytime talk show "The View" for interviewing Talarico on Feb. 2.

The Editorial Board believes that the decision to self-censor, as CBS did, only leads to more dangerous outcomes for press freedom. Caving to the FCC invites further attempts by the federal government to encroach on the independence of news outlets. Instead, members of the media should stand up for themselves and defy potential censorship.

Op-Ed: Why UConn needs a disability cultural center

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Recently, the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) sent a survey to their clients by sixth-semester social work and sociology student Mia Giancola gauging for the interest of a disability cultural center on the Storrs campus. This proposition has been a long time coming. Disabled students tend to feel silenced, invisible and largely unaccounted for on campus. For these students to feel more supported and comfortable on campus, the Board of Trustees must listen to Giancola's advocacy for the disabled UConn community with the first step of establishing a disability cultural center at their meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 25.

Let's define disability briefly before we continue this dialogue. As there are legal, social and medical definitions of disability, combining these perspectives is important as none of them exist in a vacuum. Disability is an umbrella term covering a wide range of physical and mental conditions that are viewed as impairing to the person and their ability to navigate through activities in society according to the Center for Disease Control. This includes aspects such as mobility, sensing, cognition, emotional, biological and chronic conditions. Disability can fundamentally influence your worldview as a result, making it a cultural identity instead of only just a diagnosis.

Disabled people are taught to internalize ableism and think they're the problem explicitly and implicitly. They are taught not to accept these parts of their identities but rather to loathe themselves based on how the world treats them. As disability is more than just diagnoses but rather identities and cultures with a rich history of resistance and advocacy via activist movements and self-expression, it would be in UConn's best interest to listen to the push led by disabled UConn students to establish a disability cultural center to ensure that support for disabled students doesn't end with accessibility support and other accommodations.

Why do these misconceptions about disabled people persist? It all begins with ignorance snowballing into forms of bigotry. To understand this, we need a critical and intersectional lens, as identities do not exist in isolation and run concurrently to each other. We've seen bigoted ideologies towards other marginalized identities — such as in race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and religion — in their general goals to be treated with equality, equity and the pursuit of mutual understanding. Cultural centers have been proven to build communities to combat this pervasive bigotry with immersive cultural celebration and education.

As such, a disability cultural center would help fight misconceptions, discrimination and general ignorance about disability culture as proven with previous cultural centers. This institutional affirmation would be another step in the mission for disability advocacy and equity, giving important resources that demonstrate the importance of the social lives and cultures of disabled UConn students.

CSD offers a different sort of support for UConn students. They provide accommodations but aren't primarily engineered for building a disabled community culture. They support students in different ways from the cultural center structure of providing comfortable socializing space for UConn students centered about education. A disability cultural center would also be crucial for the success of disabled students for social advocacy and community-building instead of solely accommodations that help with mobility and learning.

Having a social life is evidently important to college students and disabled students aren't exempted from this. A disability cultural center would be integral for disabled students to be motivated to finish their degrees while fighting ableism with a support system they know they can rely on and advocate for them. They can also celebrate a culture they can associate with instead of feeling ashamed. This would help everyone through further ensuring inclusivity on campus and providing programming geared for educating on disability culture.

There have been other Disability Cultural Centers established across the country that are still operating to this day and serving the social needs of disabled students. This is a tried-and-true structure that has already made positive impacts on disabled students at the locations they are available. This is not a new movement, but a movement in dire need of being understood, supported and seen as a culture that one should be proud of.

Disability isn't the only thing that defines the disabled. It plays a role in their worldview and is part of their identity, but they are also more than this single factor. As disabled students have experienced ableism anywhere but even at UConn in overt and covert ways, a great first step for administration to do to meet the social needs of disabled people is to bring a disability cultural center to the Storrs campus and hopefully inspire more of these across the state and country in the future to give disabled college students spaces that affirm these aspects of their identity and keep improving themselves not only as students but also full human beings.