



Graduate Assistants United
YOUR UNION, YOUR VOICE.

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UF-GAU STATEMENT CONDEMNING THE BAN OF APPS AT UF

On Wednesday, April 5th, UF sent an email notifying the campus community that several apps such as TikTok, WeChat and QQ will no longer function on campus Wifi. Specifically, not only did UF decree that university devices cannot have these apps on them, but also that no one can use the apps even on their own devices while connected to the university WiFi. No prior notice was given of these changes. This comes in response to emergency legislation from the Florida Board of Governors banning these apps on March 29th, 2023.

This is unprovoked censorship of students. This policy has highly negative consequences on the wellbeing of graduate students, undergraduate students, faculty, and staff who rely on these apps to communicate with loved ones. In particular, there are over a thousand graduate assistants from China, many of whom use WeChat to communicate with their families and manage finances. For international students, family members, partners, and friends are often hundreds or thousands of miles away, and these apps provide necessary connection during the extreme stress of graduate school. To cut off life-saving connection between family members is extremely cruel.

This policy is highly discriminatory towards Chinese campus community members, but this is not new for UF. Chinese faculty have been unfairly targeted and subject to unjust investigation for years at this university. Our own president, Ben Sasse, was chosen out of a pool of 700 candidates despite having blamed the Chinese people for the pandemic. UF's actions propagate xenophobia and discrimination against Chinese campus community members.

This kind of authoritarianism has no place in our community, and we are calling for an immediate reversal of this policy by the Board of Governors and an apology from UF administration to students, faculty, and staff for interrupting communication with their loved ones. At the very least, we demand that UF reverse the policy to ban use of the apps on personal devices while connected to the university WiFi.

With Love,
University of Florida Graduate Assistants United