

Tuesday, October 27, 2020

To the University of Miami School Administrators:

On behalf of leading consumer, privacy, student, and civil liberties organizations, we are calling on your administration to honor the following demands of students at the University of Miami:

- #1: Issue a campus-wide policy banning non-personal use of facial recognition technology, and issue a statement that you have done so.
- #2: Immediately schedule an open forum with students and faculty/staff to discuss community concerns and clarify how student activists who participated in First Amendment protected protest activities were identified by campus police.
- #3: Immediately schedule a meeting with the UMiami Employee Student Alliance (UMESA) to address their COVID-19 safety concerns, the subject of the original protest.

Facial recognition technology is invasive and ineffective. It's [biased](#) and is more likely to misidentify students of color, female students, and transgender/non-binary students, which can result in traumatic interactions with law enforcement, loss of class time, disciplinary action, and potentially a criminal record. The data collected is [vulnerable to hackers](#), and we've seen that schools are ill-equipped to safeguard this data. In the wrong hands, these systems, and the data they generate could be used to target and harm students. Also, facial recognition is invasive, enabling anyone with access to the system to watch students' movements and analyze facial expressions, as well as monitor who they talk to, what they do outside of class, and every move they make.

Invasive surveillance technology poses a profound threat to academic freedom. Exposing students and educators to facial recognition aggressively limits their ability to study, research, and express freely without fear of official retaliation. Students should not have to trade their right to privacy for an education.

More than 60 prominent institutions, including MIT, Harvard, Brown, Columbia, and Florida State University, have issued statements clarifying that they are not currently using facial recognition and have no plans to do so in the future. Due to the lack of clarity on University of Miami's policy in the press, an outright ban of the technology for nonpersonal use is necessary—so that students, faculty, and staff can be certain they are not being subjected to technology [your own chief of police has said “doesn't work”](#).

Additionally, we would like to express our deep concern around the lack of clarity around the university's surveillance policies and procedures—as well as potential suppression of student's first amendment rights on campus. The surveillance program that includes [1,338 cameras at UMiami](#) is Orwellian at best, and creates an environment incompatible with an institution that values academic freedom and the rights of students, faculty, and staff alike.

Sincerely, the undersigned.

ACLU of Florida
Algorithmic Justice League
Center for Human Rights and Privacy
Color Of Change
Defending Rights & Dissent
Demand Progress
Detroit Community Technology Project
Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC)
Fight for the Future
J Street U Miami
Lucy Parsons Labs
MediaJustice
Miami Law ACLU
Mijente
MPower Change
National Lawyers Guild Miami Law Chapter
Oakland Privacy
Open MIC (Open Media & Information Companies Initiative)
RootsAction.org
S.T.O.P. - Surveillance Technology Oversight Project
Students for Sensible Drug Policy
SWANALSA - South/West Asian & North African Law Students Association (Miami Law Chapter)
United We Dream