

Chancellor Feyten speaks out

By AMBER GAUDET

When it comes to free speech, TWU Chancellor and President Dr. Carine M. Feyten has a message for the TWU community: use it.

Feyten spoke at the Dallas Holocaust Museum's "Free Speech on College Campuses" panel discussion Oct. 29. The event was part of the museum's civil discourse series and featured panelists from the University of North Texas and the University of Dallas, in addition to TWU.

During the discussion, Feyten says she emphasized a university's role in promoting free speech and the importance of providing opportunities for discourse on campuses.

"I think one of the missions of higher ed is to help students learn about a variety of different perspectives – different issues – and offer those spaces," Feyten said.

Feyten said that free speech and inclusiveness are not mutually exclusive.

"I really tried to emphasize this concept that free speech is not an either/or proposition with inclusion," Feyten said. "We often associate free speech with hate speech, and that's not what it means."

Feyten mentioned that TWU students might shy away from voicing opinions in the name of preventing divisiveness.

"Our community of students seems to be valuing diversity and inclusion a lot in terms

of being respectful to everyone," Feyten said. "Part of that I think is that we have several populations considered vulnerable or that have had negative experiences and would prefer to avoid those kinds of situations as opposed to engaging them."

But she says that avoiding conflict might not always be the best approach.

"Conflict happens in life all the time, and if

you only stay within your echo chambers, you really don't learn to refine your thoughts," Feyten said. "I think it's important to learn how to handle conflict and express your opinion without creating divisiveness."

Feyten stressed that, though it may not be possible to prevent hate speech, the university aims to provide opportunities for students to voice opinions respectfully.

"One of the things

we've chosen to do here at Texas Woman's, which is different from what other universities have done, is we've identified free speech zones that people can go to and we will help manage that," Feyten said. "If they need tables to put pamphlets out or [if] it's having some safety procedures in place or making sure we don't have opposing groups in the same space, that's one thing we're committed to doing."

Feyten says the student response to the posting of Neo-Nazi fliers on campus last year underscores how free speech can be a powerful tool for inclusion.

"Our students were, I think, really amazing," Feyten said. "Instead of just going around pulling them all off, they posted 'campus with a heart' messages everywhere. I think that was a great symbol that really, the best way to handle hate speech or free speech

you don't agree with is to speak up with your side of the story."

Above all, Feyten says she hopes the TWU community understands the significance of having the right to freedom of speech.

"That's an unbelievable right that we often take for granted," Feyten said. "It's really an incredible opportunity and something we should respect."



Chancellor Feyten and TWU students

Courtesy of Dr. Feyten