

The following is a statement which will be sent to key Bucknell administrators involved in the decision to censor vaginal imagery from [The Vagina Monologues](#).

We ask that members of the Bucknell community consider [adding their names](#) to the following statement if they share our concerns.

The Vagina Monologues' "call for auditions" posters featured a slightly peeled peach, leading to a complaint from a conservative university group to the institution. Administrators communicated to staff organizers of *The Vagina Monologues* the contents of the complaint. Next thing the cast knows, the peach featured on the poster was changed to a microphone. Following this, staff were informed that they would not be permitted to sell vulva-shaped chocolate-pops as "university entities" to raise money for a local victim services center, whose services university students use, at or before the event. **In other words, staff were blocked from incorporating vagina-related imagery as a part of *The Vagina Monologues* event or promotion** by the administration. In consolation, admins suggested that already overburdened student groups such as SpeakUP could pick-up the slack and sell the vulva chocolate-pops themselves.



The administration has not indicated to staff members what policy is violated by the vulva-shaped chocolate-pops, which are a [part of the event's traditions](#)—[internationally](#). It is simple to establish that vaginas are not *obscene* considering the word's definition.¹ What is unclear is how vulva chocolate-pops would "disrupt the regular and orderly operation of the campus,"² or how a piece of chocolate is "inappropriate to an academic community"³ (or any other), as they must be in order to justify censor of staff according to Bucknell's [stated policies](#).

Bucknell's decision to suppress and censor the use of vaginal imagery in university programming is a sexist policy, and a prime example of structural sexism. *The Vagina Monologues* are a project born out of the concern that vaginas have been subjected to abuse and censorship in a cycle perpetuated by institutional policies. At this point, it should be obvious that suppression of sex education is common to environments rife with sexual abuses. Specifically, stigmatizing vaginal images stigmatizes vaginas and the people who have them. The institutional response suggests administrators would rather hide vaginas to appease these complaining forces than consider what this stigmatization means for staff and students **who have the right to an environment free from discrimination and abuse.**⁴

This suppression has clear impacts. Vaginal appearance dissatisfaction is on the rise among young people ([Michala, 2020](#)), a troubling fact because it has been repeatedly related to many aspects of sexual well-being ([Schick et al., 2010](#)). We would hope that a university with consistently high rates of sexual assault, recently reaching disturbing levels ([Kopitsky, 2022](#); [Shorney, 2022](#)) compared to [national surveys](#), would prioritize students' sexual well-being. By censoring representations of vaginas, Bucknell is instead denying students an opportunity to become more comfortable with their own bodies through joyful, delicious, and community enriching programming. **Sexist policies are those which perpetuate inequity based on sex or gender** ([Kendi, 2019](#)). **Vaginal self-consciousness certainly qualifies as one such inequity, making this a sexist policy.** Creating an environment friendly to diversifying vaginal imagery would be particularly ameliorative for students who do not embody the White, blonde, hairless, thin, non-disabled, and cisgender 'ideal' represented in mainstream pornography, **giving this decision implications of racial inequity, as well.**

This is a particularly egregious decision at Bucknell, an institution which ostensibly prides itself on supporting freedom of speech and expression. Our campus has welcomed such characters as Milo Yiannopoulos and Jordan Peterson, both unabashed misogynists. But in this case, where there is an opportunity for freedom of expression to make a positive difference in the lives of women and AFAB students — it is suppressed.

¹ Disgusting to the senses; Repulsive (Merriam Webster). **Synonyms:** Dirty, disgusting, nasty, gross, vulgar, horrible (Oxford Languages).

² [Bucknell Website](#) "Exercising Rights of Citizenship and Free Expression"

³ AAUP Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students

⁴ Bucknell Diversity Statement and Bias Incident Policy

This is not an isolated incident. Censorship and suppression have been repeatedly inflicted upon university staff trying to promote gender and racial equity on this campus. We find this repugnant. We ask that Bucknell end its cowardly attempts to suppress staff in order to avoid criticism from monied conservative interests. By doing this, they perpetuate inequity towards students who are already exposed to harm, and contribute to the institution's own difficulty retaining diverse staff members, those involved in racial and gender equity, as well as anti-rape work. Staff and students should be *proudly* supported in their efforts to improve the relationships students have with their own bodies, rather than subjected to sexist policies which discourage, block, and ban educational programming. **Bucknell must cease its pattern of censoring and suppressing staff efforts to educate students about their own bodies, their reproductive options and freedoms, if it claims to support free speech at all.**

The Student Cast of *The Vagina Monologues*

If you would like to add your name in support of this statement, please [click here](#).

If you would like to show your support by coming to the show, please [click here](#).

[This Link](#) shares the statement, signatories, a restorative student poem & The “Provocative” Peach.

[Additional Signers](#) (this link is up-to-date).

**Thank you for taking the time to consider our statement.
Since something restorative is in order we would like to share
a poem by a member of the cast:**

“My Vagina

‘Vaginas are beautiful flowers.

They are delicate and small and they have beautiful petals.’

My vagina is not something that can be picked and prodded.

Not something that people need to be careful around.

Not something people can step on.

Not something that blossoms only twice a year.

Not something that needs to be tended to by someone else.

I see my vagina as a force to be reckoned with.

A masterpiece.

A protest.

A revolution.

A delicacy.

My vagina is a fire.

It lights up a dark room.

You can't step on it.

It ignites when I want it to.

It is something people should be scared of.

My vagina can brand you, hurt you, and fight you if need be.

My vagina is a masterpiece.

It's painted with a beautiful collection of colors.

It should be framed in a museum.

It should be looked at by tourists every fucking day.

It should be worth billions of dollars.

My vagina is a protest.

It should be marched along with by others.

It chants and defies the norm.

It erupts into roars.

My vagina is a revolution.

It leads a group of others.

It starts a conversation.

It changes policies put in place.

My vagina is a delicacy.

It's expensive and rare.

Its sweet nectar is not to everyone's taste.

It's served in five-star restaurants.

People have year-long reservations just to taste it.

I hate flowers.

And so does my vagina."

- Maya