

To the Scripps Community:

There has been a good deal of controversy in the last 24 hours over the decision of Scripps College and the Elizabeth Hubert Malott Public Affairs Program to not pay George Will to speak on campus. There are a number of important issues that are being conflated, and I wanted to take a moment to share some perspective.

The issue of sexual assault is complex, serious, and personal to Scripps students. The College has worked on a continuing basis to provide the resources and support to build students' trust and create a safe and secure campus environment. Scripps College has embraced a "yes means yes" policy, and we have spent the past several years working with our partner institutions to build a shared understanding of consent throughout the Claremont University Consortium community. We continue to work on ways to advance a productive dialogue on the issue of consent that we hope will further the community's awareness and support.

We invited George Will to speak as part of our Elizabeth Hubert Malott Public Affairs Program because he is a prominent conservative commentator, and we believed our community would benefit from the healthy intellectual debate that has been the hallmark of the program since 2006. Over the past eight years, the Malott Public Affairs Program has diversified the educational environment for our students by featuring conservative thought leaders in a widely publicized and well-attended event series. We do not shy away from bringing strong conservative viewpoints into our community.

Sexual assault is not a conservative or liberal issue. And it is too important to be trivialized in a political debate or wrapped into a celebrity controversy. For that reason, after Mr. Will authored a column questioning the validity of a specific sexual assault case that reflects similar experiences reported by Scripps students, we decided not to finalize the speaker agreement.

Scripps College is planning next year's Elizabeth Hubert Malott Public Affairs event, which will celebrate the ten-year anniversary of this important program at Scripps College. We will continue to welcome thoughtful, respected speakers representing diverse political perspectives to campus, and we look forward to the stimulating intellectual discourse that will occur as a result.

Sincerely,

Lori Bettison-Varga  
President