

Dear colleagues,

My name is Verónica Rodríguez Ballesteros and I have been teaching Spanish, Hispanic cultures and literatures, theatre and puppetry arts in CAS Romance Studies for 13 years.

As an artist, scholar and educator, I am a firm advocate for Academic Freedom and free speech, since those are the core values that any institution of higher education should honor and cultivate. Unfortunately, I have observed and even experienced firsthand how these fundamental values are being threatened by radical ideologies that cloud our mission as a center for the advancement of knowledge and a hub of creativity and innovation.

As a university, we thrive when our values are aligned and we pursue a common goal, as stated in our mission. As scholars, we grow when our views are challenged, and we are exposed to a diversity of perspectives. As educators, we advance in our pedagogical mission when we are open to new methodologies, divergent thinking and innovative approaches to teaching and learning. As artists, we develop our potential to the fullest when we are exposed to a diverse array of experiences, worldviews and ideas.

These are also the values that our President Melissa Gilliam reminded us of in her inaugural speech which resonated powerful with me, and that have inspired me to apply to chair the Committee of Academic Freedom today. In her own words "Our traditions of free speech and academic freedom are critical to who we are as an institution and so is our tradition of diversity and finding common ground in order to engage difficult topics and acknowledge one another across our differences."

I count on your vote to make our university a place for healthy and nuanced debate and the advancement of knowledge, innovative pedagogies and creative solutions. I know that together we can restore our university to her role as a compass for society in times of uncertainty. Not because it provides the answers, but because it never ceased to ask the questions, even when it was uncomfortable or difficult to do so.

Thank you for your support!

Kind Regards,

Verónica Rodríguez Ballesteros

Senior Lecturer in Spanish & Posse Mentor Atlanta17

FirstGen Mentor & Mental Health Gatekeeper,

BU VR Club, Facilitator, Curator and Content Creator in XR Technologies

BU Opera Institute, Coach for Spanish

Artistic Director of La Barraca Hispanoamericana

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