

# OREGON ASSOCIATION OF SCHOLARS



## OAS Announces Winners of Inaugural Oregon Campus Freedom Awards

28 May 2019

Two Portland State University students have been honored as the winners of the inaugural Oregon Campus Freedom Awards for the 2018-19 academic year, the Oregon Association of Scholars announced today.

Blake Horner of the PSU Freethinkers and Philip Arola of the PSU College Republicans both made notable contributions to the expansion of academic freedom and civil discourse during the academic year with their campus activities.

During the past academic year, Horner's group PSU Freethinkers held public discussions on physician-assisted suicide, the rich, elections, academic hoaxes, academic freedom, sex and dating, animal rights, universal basic income, the burning of Notre Dame Cathedral, parenting, immigration, grand narratives, and colonizing Mars. The group welcomed opinions from all sides of the political spectrum without fear or favor.

"PSU Freethinkers is unique on Oregon college campuses for the breadth and openness of its public discussions," said OAS President Bruce Gilley. "Their openness to a variety of opinions, especially those that challenge the campus thought police, makes them a vital contributor to freedom in higher education and beyond."

Arola's PSU Campus Republicans, meanwhile, found themselves in the national spotlight in March after one of their events was disrupted by radicals trying to silence viewpoints that they disagreed with.

"Philip's civilized and graceful handling of that event was a model of good citizenship and taking the higher road when faced with the illiberal dogmas of today's so-called 'anti-fascist' movement," said Gilley. He added: "Thanks to Philip, the term 'cowbell' is now used more often to refer to attempts to silence free speech than in reference to '70s rock."

Two weeks later, Arola was present at the White House when President Trump signed an Executive Order requiring publicly-funded institutions of higher education to protect freedoms of speech and inquiry.

"We can debate the Executive Order, but there is no denying that Philip and his group deserve to be recognized at the highest level for their contributions to a more civilized public square," Gilley said.

Launched during the 2018-19 academic year, the Oregon Campus Freedom Awards are an effort to expand freedoms and intellectual diversity at Oregon college campuses. The awards, which will be given on an annual basis to students enrolled in Oregon colleges and universities, are the first of their kind in the United States.

“Students who expand freedoms and intellectual diversity on campus are providing an invaluable public service to higher education in Oregon and should be recognized,” said Gilley. “They help to ensure the conditions for research and teaching excellence and to equip our students to operate successfully in a pluralistic American society.”

*The Oregon Association of Scholars is the Oregon affiliate of the National Association of Scholars, a network of scholars and citizens united by a commitment to academic freedom, disinterested scholarship, and excellence in American higher education. Membership in NAS is open to all who share a commitment to these broad principles. NAS publishes a journal and has state and regional affiliates. Visit NAS at [www.nas.org](http://www.nas.org), and OAS at [www.oregonscholars.org](http://www.oregonscholars.org). Contact: Dr. Bruce Gilley, OAS President, [brucegilley@yahoo.com](mailto:brucegilley@yahoo.com)*