

Policy Name: Freedom of Expression Policy
Approval Authority: President
Interpreting and Implementing Authority: Provost
Effective: January 1, 2020
Last Revised: November 2019
Next Review Date: November, 2024

Policy Statement

The free and open exchange of ideas is essential both to American democracy and an academic community. Therefore, Wesleyan College supports the broadest possible latitude to speak, write, listen, challenge, and learn. Except insofar as limitations on that freedom are necessary to the functioning of the College, the College fully respects and supports the freedom of all members of the Wesleyan College community to discuss any problem that presents itself.¹

Entities Affected by the Policy

Every member of the Wesleyan College community (students, faculty, and staff) has the right to express their ideas, even if they are unpopular or discomfiting. When a member of the College community expresses a personal view, they should not give the impression they are speaking for the College. The academic freedom policy in the Faculty Handbook outlines the rights of faculty in expressing views in the classroom and in their scholarly work.

Wesleyan's diversity is among our greatest strengths. Because of our diversity, we will at times disagree. As an institution committed to the advancement of knowledge, and as a training ground for the intellectual, social, and ethical leaders of the future, Wesleyan is a place where difficult, at times uncomfortable, conversations deserve exploration and protection. At the same time, Wesleyan is committed to increasing student understanding and acceptance in a diverse community and condemns all instances of intolerant speech or conduct.²

Policy Details

- Wesleyan students, faculty, and staff may assemble to express their views.
- Wesleyan students, faculty and staff must reserve meeting or assembly space through the College space reservation system.
- Visitors/speakers who are invited to campus to express their views must be invited by a recognized student group, faculty or staff.
- The College encourages recognized student groups, faculty, or staff who invite visitors/speakers to campus to provide an opportunity for opposing views to also be heard.

Responsibilities

Wesleyan College is also committed to the safety of students, faculty, staff and visitors. While maximum latitude is provided for the expression and exploration of ideas, all individuals are forbidden from defacing College or personal property, physical intimidation or harassment, or disruption of ordinary campus activities, such as classes or work by employees.³ Therefore, the College may reasonably regulate the time, place, and manner of expression to ensure that it does not disrupt the ordinary activities of the College. But these are narrow exceptions to the general principle of freedom of expression, and it is vitally important that these exceptions never be used in a manner that is inconsistent with the College's commitment to a free and open discussion of ideas.⁴

Interpreting and Implementing Authority

The Provost's Office is charged with the interpretation and implementation of this policy.

¹ Language taken from Princeton University's Statement on Freedom of Expression, <https://rrr.princeton.edu/university#comp113>

² Language taken from recommendation 2 from AAUP's report titled "Freedom of Expression and Campus Speech Codes," <https://www.aaup.org/report/freedom-expression-and-campus-speech-codes>

³ Language taken from recommendation 1 from AAUP's report titled "Freedom of Expression and Campus Speech Codes" <https://www.aaup.org/report/freedom-expression-and-campus-speech-codes>

⁴ Language taken from Princeton University's Statement on Freedom of Expression, <https://rrr.princeton.edu/university#comp113>

