

DePaul University Guiding Principles on Speech and Expression

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Free speech and expression are central to the purpose of the university. Research, scholarship, and education are impossible without open discourse and robust debate. The exercise of reason depends upon one's ability both to express and to listen respectfully and critically to competing arguments. We aspire to be a community marked by compassion and mutual respect, in which we never lose sight of the potential effects, both beneficial and harmful, of our words and our expressive conduct. When such words or conduct harmfully affect the community or its members, we should respond by reflecting ever more seriously on our shared values of compassion and respect, and by fostering education about our enduring commitment to inclusiveness and reciprocal understanding. Ultimately, by remaining open to a broad range of ideas and opinions—even those that may appear to some detestable, uncomfortable, or false—we foster mutual understanding, test our beliefs, and create the best conditions for seeking knowledge. Intrinsic to our belief in the value of inclusive conversation is a commitment to the right of speakers to voice their viewpoints even at the risk of controversy, and a correlative respect for the right of listeners to respond with their own expression, or to choose to turn away.

DePaul's vital and distinctive Catholic and Vincentian mission makes free expression particularly important at this university. Our mission places the highest priority on instruction and learning, activities that are immeasurably enriched by exposure to differing points of view. Our mission serves to foster a community of diverse beliefs and values in order to serve the common good inside and outside the university; such a community cannot thrive without full and open communication. And, above all, our mission strives to ennoble the dignity of each person. That dignity depends in no small measure upon the individual's freedom to give voice to his or her beliefs.