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## *Policy on Speech and Expression Preamble*

In January 1989, the Speech and Expression Policy of the Division of Student Affairs of the Main Campus of Georgetown University was developed by the Committee on Speech and Expression and implemented after widespread consultation with faculty, students and administrators. In December 2015, Georgetown University's Faculty Senate Steering Committee charged an ad hoc Speech and Expression Committee to review this policy. The Faculty Senate Speech and Expression Committee recommended elevating the policy by making it part of the Faculty Handbook and developed revised language to bring greater clarity to the policy while remaining consistent with the spirit of the original. Georgetown University approved the Policy on Speech and Expression on June 8, 2017.

In 1989, Reverend James Walsh, S.J., a professor in the Department of Theology, wrote the following statement to provide an appropriate context for understanding the policy:

"The following policy on free speech and expression derives from a certain understanding of what a university is and of what Georgetown University is. I will attempt to articulate that understanding.

1. The nature of a university. A university is many things but central to its being is discourse, discussion, debate: the untrammelled expression of ideas and information. This discourse is carried on communally: we all speak and we all listen. Ideally, discourse is open and candid and also-ideally-is characterized by courtesy, mutual reverence and even charity.
2. The university teaches by being what it is. What the university takes seriously as an institution imparts (to its students especially but not exclusively) important lessons. The fundamental lesson it imparts-just by being what it is-has to do with the nature of the intellectual life. Rigor of thought and care in research; the willingness to address any question whatever; the habit of self-critical awareness of one's own biases and presupposition; reverence for fellow members of the university community and openness to their ideas, which is reductively a concern for the truth itself-the list could be prolonged. These habits of mind and attitude have a powerfully shaping influence on all members of the academic community.

A university that sends contrary “signals” to any of its members (as, obviously, by tolerating plagiarism, violence, intellectual shoddiness, or any sort of special pleading in the interest of ideology or vested interest) betrays (<https://www.georgetown.edu>).

3. “Free speech” is central to the life of the university. The category “free speech” suggests another realm of life and argument, that of American constitutional law. Indeed, members of a university community exercise “dual citizenship”: we are academics and we are Americans. The rights and obligations that flow from our participation in each of the two orders—academic and constitutional—are not reducible to those of either one, nor superceded by one or the other, but neither are they in conflict. At the same time, the body of legal principles elaborated from the First Amendment is usefully applied to particular problems. For example, “free speech”, in the constitutional sense, may be limited by, and only by, reasonable and non discriminatory considerations of “time, place and manner.” These legal categories are most helpful in resolving the problem of how to reconcile the absolute openness of expression proper to a university with other considerations: numbers of people, multiplicity of activities, scheduling, space available and so on. The long and short of the matter is that “time, place and manner” are the only norms allowable in governing the expression of ideas and sharing of information that is the very life of the university.

4. More is better. Discourse is central to the life of the university. To forbid or limit discourse contradicts everything the university stands for. This conviction proceeds from several assumptions. Besides those sketched above, there is the assumption that the exchange of ideas will lead to clarity, mutual understanding, the tempering of harsh and extreme positions, the softening of hardened positions and ultimately the attainment of truth. Some ideas, simply by being expressed, sink without a trace; others cry out for the intervention of reflection, contrary evidence, probing questions. None of that happens when one cuts off discourse. John Henry Newman’s formulation applies here: “flagrant evils cure themselves by being flagrant.” The remedy for silly or extreme or offensive ideas is not less free speech but more.

5. The tradition of Georgetown University demands that we live up to these ideals. In this whole question, matters of history and of convictions central to the Catholic and Jesuit tradition come into play. The historical precedent of the medieval Catholic university, with its lively practice of the “disputation,” and its role in the formulation, clarification and development of doctrine, the Catholic teaching that between faith and reason there can be no fundamental conflict, the Catholic teaching about the autonomy of reason, certain Jesuit principles about putting the most favorable construction on your neighbor’s argument and

especially about reverence for conscience; the vision of our founder, John Carroll, of a “... general and equal toleration, . . . giving a free circulation to fair argument,” and of an Academy that would be the “first in (http://www.georgetown.edu)”—these and many other fundamentals of the tradition in which Georgetown stands prohibit any limitation upon discourse. Georgetown’s identification with the Catholic and Jesuit tradition, far from limiting or compromising the ideal of free discourse, requires that we live up to that ideal.

6. Violation of these principles, by whatever parties, must have consequences. This is a corollary of the principles themselves and necessary to vindicate the nature of the University itself. The offenses envisioned in the following policy amount to cutting off discourse. Making it impossible for others to speak or be heard or seen, or in any way obstructing the free exchange of ideas, is an attack on the core principles the University lives by and may not be tolerated.”

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