



Policy on Freedom of Speech

Rationale & Core Values

Worcester State University is a collaborative and vibrant community for learning, critical inquiry, research and discovery, as well as a place of civility and respect. When engaging with one another or acting on behalf of WSU, each member of the WSU community is expected to uphold the University's Core values:

- Academic Excellence
- Engaged Citizenship
- Open Exchange of Ideas
- Diversity and Inclusiveness
- Civility and Integrity

WSU is an inclusive community that supports each person's First Amendment right to express opinions and ideas, including unpopular or controversial viewpoints, without governmental interference, retaliation or punishment. WSU also protects each community member's right to an environment free from discrimination and harassment based on characteristics protected by law.

Although WSU supports all forms of constitutionally protected expression, the community must understand that certain types of expression are not protected:

1. Words or expressive conduct that incite violence or illegal activity;
2. Obscenity or lewd behavior;
3. True threats;
4. Defamation/libel;
5. Expressive activity that involves illegal conduct (e.g., vandalism, trespass, disturbance, terrorizing activity);
6. Harassing speech or conduct that is (1) unwelcome, (2) discriminatory, (3) directed at an individual, (4) on the basis of his or her protected status, and (5) so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively bars the victim's access to an educational opportunity or benefit.

WSU may also impose reasonable limits on the time, place and manner of expressive activities for the purposes of assuring that the administrative functions supporting WSU's mission continue and that all community members are able to learn, teach and work safely and without disruption.

Operational Requirements

Individuals or groups may use traditional public forums or designated public forums on campus for protected expressive activities, seven (7) days/week, during the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 pm. In order for the University to arrange staff, trash receptacles, and signage, etc., groups greater than 10 must request a permit from University Police, two (2) business days in advance of their expressive activities. Expressive activities identified in this policy are distinguished from curricular activities engaged in by faculty members and students; curricular activities respond to the principles and standards of academic freedom.

Scope

This policy shall apply to all members of the campus community including but not limited to students and employees of the university, including faculty, staff, contract employees, student employees, and volunteers, as well as visitors to campus, third party organizations or groups who seek to host events in university buildings or on grounds affiliated with the university.

Definitions

- First Amendment to the US Constitution
 - “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”
- Speech
 - The Supreme Court has interpreted “speech” broadly, to include talking, writing and symbolic expression, such as displaying flags and wearing armbands.
- Traditional Public Forum
 - Available for expressive activity Include public areas on campus that are generally open to the public, while not in use for a specific educational, administrative, research, health, residential, dining, athletic, or recreational purpose. Examples include the Binienda Family Green and the lawn in front of the administration building.
- Designated Public Forum
 - Sometimes available for expressive activity during periods when temporarily designated by university officials for events and activities. Examples of designated forums include, but are not limited to auditoriums, lobbies, parking lots, and athletic fields.
- Non- Public Forum
 - Unavailable for expressive activity. Examples include, but are not limited to, interior spaces within academic buildings and administration buildings including faculty, administrative and student offices, libraries, cafeterias and other eateries, computer labs, and residence halls.

For additional information. please contact Stacey Luster, J.D - Worcester State University, General Counsel. sluster@worcester.edu or call the Office of Diversity Inclusion and Equal Opportunity at 508-929-8053.