

DePaul University Guiding Principles on Speech and Expression

We are a university

DePaul is committed to fostering a community that welcomes open discourse. We believe that intellectual inquiry is enriched immeasurably by robust debate and exposure to differing points of view. By remaining open to a broad range of ideas and opinions, we foster mutual understanding, test our beliefs, and create the most effective conditions for seeking knowledge.

We are a Vincentian university

DePaul's mission is built upon the Vincentian ideal of universal dignity in which each person is invaluable and worthy of respect as a member of the human family. That dignity depends in no small measure upon each individual's freedom and opportunity as a speaker to give voice to his or her beliefs, and upon each individual's freedom and opportunity as a listener to choose whether and how to respond. We believe that human interaction should always be conducted with civility and mutual respect. We believe that views and beliefs can be tested – *should* be tested – as part of the intellectual mission that we serve, but always in furtherance of the goals of education, intellectual enrichment, and preparation for citizenship.

We are a community

As a Vincentian university, DePaul aspires to be a community of speakers and listeners marked by compassion and mutual respect, a community in which we never lose sight of the potential effects, both beneficial and harmful, of our words and of our expressive conduct. Members of our community have rights and responsibilities. DePaul affirms the right of speakers to voice their viewpoints, even at the risk of controversy. DePaul also insists that all speakers remember that the right of expression carries with it the equally important responsibility to exercise that right with a conscientious respect for human dignity. We accept that there is a distinction between being provocative and being hurtful. Speech whose primary purpose is to wound is inconsistent with our Vincentian and Catholic values. The university community must meet these situations by reasserting our fundamental values and by fostering educational opportunities, where appropriate.

We are committed to an ongoing discussion about speech and expression

DePaul is dedicated to engaging diligently and proactively in discussions concerning the many difficult issues raised by speech and expression in a university community with diverse beliefs and values. No set of guiding principles or policies can ever do justice to the range and difficulty of these issues. These Guiding Principles, while not policy, are intended to serve as a framework for those ongoing and challenging discussions.

Several University policies and procedures set forth specific standards for conduct in a variety of circumstances that could involve speech and expression. Community members are encouraged to consult sources such as the [University Policies and Procedures website](#) for further information on specific policies.