



POLICY

Title: Free Expression and Campus Disruption

Policy Statement

The University of Vermont is a place to learn and to teach. It is not a cloister--it does not live in a vacuum. It is both in the world and of the world. Its mission is to educate people for leadership in society.--Board of Trustees, May 1969.

The University of Vermont upholds and defends the right to free expression, including the freedom to express dissent, within the context of the law and personal responsibility. Freedom of expression is vital to the shared goal of the pursuit of knowledge.

The University's fundamental commitment is to the principle that debate or deliberation may not be suppressed because the ideas put forth are thought by some, or even by most members of the University community to be offensive, repugnant, or hurtful. It is for individual members of the University community, not for the University as an institution, to make those judgments for themselves, and to act on those judgments by openly and vigorously contesting the ideas that they oppose. Fostering the ability of members of the University community to engage in civil discourse in an effective and responsible manner is an essential part of the University's educational mission.

To protect free expression of others on campus, the University has the authority and obligation to enforce rules that restrict and sanction those who seek to disrupt the expression of others. Additionally, the University reserves the right to respond appropriately to unprotected speech.

Reason for the Policy

See Policy Statement

Applicability of the Policy

This policy applies to all University of Vermont students, faculty, staff, University recognized groups and organizations, and non-affiliated persons and groups on University property or at University sponsored events.

Definitions

Civil Discourse: Robust, honest, frank, and constructive dialogue and deliberation that seeks to advance the public interest.

Disruption: conduct that obstructs or impedes teaching, research, administration, disciplinary procedures, or other University activities; conduct that infringes upon the rights of University community members or members of the public lawfully using campus

grounds or facilities, such as the rights of privacy, personal security, or unimpeded ingress and egress.

Free Expression: rights guaranteed by the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution of the United States, including rights to freedom of speech, peaceful assembly, petition, and association. Free expression, however, ceases at the point when its exercise infringes on the rights of others.

Protected Speech: speech and other forms of expression that are protected under federal and state law. Protected Speech shall not be censored, curtailed, regulated, or prevented on the basis of content or viewpoint, but may be bound by reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions.

Unprotected Speech: speech and other forms of expression that are not protected under federal and state law, including true threats, fighting words, incitement of imminent lawless action, harassment, obscenity, defamation, and infringement of the intellectual property or privacy rights of others. Unprotected Speech shall be censored, curtailed, regulated, or prohibited on property owned or leased by UVM, and at UVM sponsored events or programs.

Procedures

Engaging In Free Expression

The University's commitment to free expression is operationalized through several interrelated University policies and procedures. These documents guide our community regarding the exercise of free expression on campus, or in association with University sponsored activities, within the boundaries of lawful behavior.

The University reserves the right to specify time, manner and place for the exercise of these freedoms, guided by factors that include safety, the rights of others and the normal functioning of the University, as follows:

Use of University Facilities, Grounds, and Resources

- [Banners Display](#)
- [Campus Speakers](#)
- [Computer, Communication, and Network Technology Acceptable Use](#)
- [Facilities and Grounds Use](#)
- [Filming on Campus](#)
- [Flag](#)
- [Political Engagement, Advocacy, and Campaign Related Activities](#)
- [Posting and Solicitation](#)
- [Temporary Structures](#)
- [University Name, Symbols, Letterhead, and other Proprietary Indicia of Affiliation](#)
- [Use of Campus Mail and Letterboxes](#)

Promoting Safety and Security

- [Code of Student Conduct](#)
- [Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct](#)
- [No Trespass Notices](#)
- [Personal Safety and Security](#)
- [Weapons](#)

Preventing Disruption

If the University or organizer of an event on campus, or otherwise sponsored by UVM, has actual knowledge that planned actions could disrupt an event, the University or the organizer is encouraged to confer with UVM Police Services and the Vice President for Operations and Safety as early as possible. At the event, a designated UVM official, or a representative of the organizer, is encouraged to make the following announcement when the event begins:

- Hello. My name is _____ [name and title].
- Thank you for attending this event. UVM respects and values free expression, including the lawful expression of dissent.
- Dissent is welcome so long as it does not interfere with the ability of the speaker to deliver the message or the ability of the audience to receive the speaker's message.
- An individual whose actions interfere in this manner will be warned. If the individual or group continues to interfere, they will be escorted out and will be held accountable under relevant University policies.
- Our goal is to have a peaceful and respectful event. We appreciate your cooperation.

The announcement should be consistent in substance and delivery, regardless of the identity of the speaker(s) or those expressing dissent, or of the content or the viewpoints to be expressed at the event.

Responding to Disruption

If disruption occurs once the event has begun, a UVM official or a representative of the organizer should pause the event and read the above statement.

If disruption continues, whenever possible and appropriate, UVM officials shall attempt to resolve the situation through dialogue via University administrators or faculty. If reasonable efforts to resolve the situation through dialogue fail, or where disruption presents an imminent and significant threat of violence or risk of harm to persons or property, persons engaged in disruptive conduct will first be advised that failure to desist may result in University disciplinary action, removal from the event, issuance of a trespass citation, and/or criminal prosecution. In cases where, in the considered judgment of UVM officials, action must be taken immediately to avert personal injury or property damage, notice of the violation shall be given at the same time as preventive or responsive action is instituted. Nothing in this section is intended to, nor shall it, prevent duly authorized public safety officials, including UVM Police Services, from taking action consistent with applicable law to protect persons and property.

The overriding goal of the University during a disruption is to reestablish with deliberate speed an atmosphere conducive to communication between the speaker and the audience, in order to ensure full respect for the rights of all parties.

Adjudication of Cited Violations

This policy is intended to support, not supplant, existing University policies, including without limitation those contained in the Code of Student Conduct, and policies and contract provisions applicable to faculty and staff. Violations of this policy may result in UVM disciplinary charges, with sanctions ranging from a warning to permanent separation from the University, issuance of a no-trespass notice, and/or civil or criminal prosecution. Violations of this policy by a University-recognized group or organization may result in suspension or removal of associated privileges. UVM disciplinary charges shall be processed through normal institutional channels.

Contacts

Questions concerning the daily operational interpretation of this policy should be directed to the following (in accordance with the policy elaboration and procedures):	
Title(s)/Department(s):	Contact Information:
Vice President for Operations and Public Safety	

Forms/Flowcharts/Diagrams

None

Related Documents/Policies

See Above.

Regulatory References/Citations

None

Training/Education

Training will be provided on an as-needed basis as determined by the Approval Authority or the Responsible Official.

About this Policy

Responsible Official:	President	Approval Authority:	President
Policy Number:	V. 1.1.4	Effective Date:	August 13, 2020
Revision History:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• V. 2.0.2.1 effective May 19, 2007• V. 1.1.2/V. 2.0.2.2 effective September 19, 2011• V. 1.1.3 effective February 1, 2017		

University of Vermont Policies and Operating Procedures are subject to amendment. For the official, approved, and most recent version, please visit UVM's [Institutional Policies Website](#).