

POLICY



Widener University

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION POLICY (SOLICITATION FOR POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS, OR SOCIAL ACTION CAUSES)

Policy Statement Policy Status:

Active

Policy Section:

Certain units that are responsible for numerous policies may wish to organize related policies into topic-based sections.

Responsible Executive(s):

Vice President & Dean of Students, Student Engagement and Transformation

Responsible Office(s):

Office of the Dean of Students, Office of Student Engagement

Contact(s):

Fred McCall, Vice President & Dean of Students

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FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION POLICY (SOLICITATION FOR POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS, OR SOCIAL ACTION CAUSES)

POLICY STATEMENT

The purpose of this policy is to support and encourage the free expression of ideas by Widener University students, faculty, staff, and members of the university community. It is designed to protect the rights of those who wish to exercise the free expression of ideas, while at the same maintaining the educational, research, administrative functions, and other legitimate operations of the university. Individuals or groups wishing to support open expression may do so within the time, place, and manner framework outlined in this policy and procedures.

SCOPE

The Freedom of Expression Policy applies to faculty, staff, and students at all Widener University Campuses. This policy is applicable to guests and outside organizations permitted to participate with members of the Widener University community.

DEFINITIONS

- A. Open Expression includes all legal and non-discriminatory forms of communication and artistic expression as well as the freedom to listen, watch, protest, demonstrate, or otherwise participate in such communication.
- B. Demonstration means a form of organized public speech related to issues of interest to the organizers and participants.
- C. University Community includes all students, staff, and faculty of the university.
- D. Independent Speaker is an outside guest invited or permitted to speak on campus.
- E. Unreasonable Disruption includes, but is not limited to, blocked access to buildings, or university activities, creating excessive noise that interferes with, or obstructs, university business, or university operations.
- F. Literature means expressive material, whether written, typed or printed, or displayed in an electronic format

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- G. Guests include any person or organization not enrolled or employed by the university.

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Widener University is committed to a learning and working environment where the freedom to express varying ideas and viewpoints is valued. The freedom to debate, research, and discuss competing ideas is core to higher education and a thriving university community. It is designed to protect the rights of those who wish to exercise the free expression of ideas, while at the same time balancing the rights of those who are engaged in critical learning activities and university operations. The university implements certain time, place and manner limitation to preserve the educational mission of the institution and contribute to the safety of members of the university community. The enumeration herein of certain time, place and manner limitations is not intended as all-inclusive and does not preclude the imposition of other legitimate limitations.

Widener University affirms the right of all community members to engage in a variety of open expression activities including demonstrations, distributing and posting printed materials, and inviting speakers open to the campus community. Free expression activities must not conflict with the normal uses of the campus, the rights of others, and the limitations of lawful conduct. Individuals or groups wishing to support open expression activities may do so provided such activities, in the sole judgment of the university, do not unreasonably interfere or conflict with the educational, research, administrative functions, or other legitimate operations of the university. To preserve the order that is necessary for the enjoyment of freedom by members of the university community and to prevent activities that preclude the university from carrying on its functions, all free expression activities are governed by the following regulations:

Freedom of Expression Request Form

- The appropriate “Freedom of Expression” request form must be submitted and approved by the Division of Student Engagement and Transformation at least five business days prior to the activity’s scheduled date. The request form requires contact information of the event coordinator(s) and the time, location, scope of the event.
- Non-Widener University participants must be identified by name, contact information, and group affiliation and are subject to approval of the University.

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- Approved Freedom of Expression requests are only valid for their listed date.
- Approved Freedom of Expression requests are content neutral and seek to coordinate the potential multiple users of limited space, ensure preservation of university facilities, and ensure the activity is managed in a way that provides for the safety of the participants and the university community.
- The Freedom of Expression Form must be completed for activities on any University Campus. Once the form is completed there will be coordination with Delaware Law School and Commonwealth Law School if the open expression activity will take place on those campuses.
- The Freedom of Expression request indicates approval or disapproval by the university to:
 - Distribute literature on campus.
 - Engage in demonstrations and protests
 - Invite Independent Speakers
 - Grant additional Open Expression requests by the participants.

Freedom of Expression Activity Requirements

- No activity may be conducted in a manner constituting a violation of federal, state, or local law or university policy.
- No activity may obstruct or seriously impair any other university-sponsored or university-authorized activities.
- No activity shall hinder or obstruct the ingress or egress to any university property or facility.
- No activity shall create a volume of noise that unreasonably interferes with any university-sponsored or university-authorized activity. Sound amplification equipment must be approved.
- Participants shall not employ force or violence or intentionally constitute an immediate threat of force or violence against members of the university community, university property, or others.
- No temporary, semi-permanent, or permanent structure may be erected.
- Upon conclusion of any activity, users are responsible for leaving university property in its original condition. Failure to do so may result in the assessment of a maintenance fee.
- Widener University reserves the right to limit access to its premises when it is in the interest of the university to do so.

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- No activity may be conducted on campus in such numbers, in such proximity, or in such a fashion as to physically hinder entrance to, exit from, or normal use of any university property or facility.
- All Freedom of Expression Activities and participants must remain a minimum of 20 feet from any university building.
- No demonstration or protest activity may be conducted within any university building.
- No demonstration or protest activity shall occur, and no participants shall assemble immediately outside buildings at times when they are normally in use for classes, study, research, or administrative or office functions.
- No outside organization or non-affiliated individual may use Widener University property for Freedom of Expression Activities without a university sponsor and University permission.
- Any literature being shared during demonstrations and protests must be submitted together with the Freedom of Expression request form for approval
- The University reserves the right at all times to require insurance acceptable to the University.

Posting on campus (Chester Campus), including Flyers, Posters, Banners, and Chalking (collectively, "Postings")

The Freedom of Expression policy dictates posting advertisements on public area bulletin boards and social media. All students, faculty, staff, and guests must adhere to the following policy guidelines:

- Postings of any nature posted on campus by any student organization or University Department must have written approval from the Office of Student Engagement. Unauthorized postings may be removed immediately from public posting areas in any campus building.
- Postings must occur in approved locations on campus including bulletin boards and other common areas (full list of approved areas can be accessed through the Office of Student Engagement).
- All Postings of events must include the event date, time, location, contact information of the sponsoring organization, and a clear description of the event.
- All Postings of events must state that events must be open to the entire campus community and must have a confirmed location to be considered for approval.

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- External campus guests or vendors must be sponsored by a recognized student organization or University Department to utilize Postings on any University campus and be approved by the University.
- All Postings must align with all university policies and values.
- The Office of Student Engagement requires at least two business days for the review and approval process. The organization contact will be notified once the Postings are approved or disapproved. All Postings of events must be removed within two business days after the event has taken place.
- An organization may post only one notice per event on any single bulletin board. Multiple Postings of the same event will be removed, as everyone has an equal opportunity for display space.
- Publicity posted on painted surfaces, windows, or any other unapproved areas will be removed and will subject the organization or department responsible to a loss of privileges and/or the payment of facility damages.
- Any postings in residence halls must be approved and coordinated through the Office of Student Living.
- Requests to chalk the sidewalks on campus must be submitted to the Office of Student Engagement using the campus chalking request form.

Denial of Freedom of Expression Request

A Freedom of Expression Request can be denied for various reasons, including, but not limited to, the following:

- The request or its requirements are incomplete or contain a material falsehood or misrepresentation.
- The applicant has damaged university property on previous occasions and has not paid for damages.
- A request has been granted to an earlier applicant for the same time and place.
- The intended use would present a danger to the health or safety of members of the university community.
- The applicant has violated the terms of a prior request.
- The activity interferes or conflicts with the educational, research, or administrative functions or other legitimate operations of the university.
- The Freedom of Expression Activity requested is violation of federal, state, or local law or University policies.
- The Freedom of Expression Activity requested is discriminatory.

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Violations of the Freedom of Expression Policy

- Violation of these requirements, as well as the violation of federal, state, local, or university laws, policies, protocols or regulations, may serve as the basis of denial of access in the future.
- Violation of these requirements may result in disciplinary action under the Student Code of Conduct for students and student organizations as well as human resource actions for faculty and staff.

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PROCEDURES

Freedom of Expression Activities

- Members of the university community must complete the [Freedom of Expression Request Form](#) five business days in advance of planned activity.
- A University representative will respond within two business days with an acknowledgement of the request and to schedule a meeting.
- Organizers must schedule a meeting with the Vice President & Dean of Students or their university designee to review the details of the event.
- Members of the university community must complete online space reservations form three business days in advance of event.
- University designee will send confirmation to organizer and copy university offices (Facilities, University Center, Campus Security, PLT representative, etc.).
- University designee will be present to support implementation of open expression activity.
- Impromptu Freedom of Expression Activities protests may be permitted in special circumstances. Organizers must reach out to the Vice President & Dean of Students, or their designee, two days prior for special permission.
- The University reserves the right at all times to require insurance acceptable to the University

Postings

- Members of the university community must complete the public posting or campus chalking policy portions of the [Freedom of Expression Request Form](#) at least two business days in advance of any planned activity.
- Submissions should include event date, time, location, contact information for sponsoring organization and clear description of the event.
- External organizations, individuals, or vendors must have a verified university sponsor to promote or organize events.
- Requests for posting in the residence halls requires special approval (indicated in the online form) and must be distributed by the Office of Student Living.
- All postings or campus chalking exhibits must be removed from all public bulletin boards or other spaces within 48 hours after the event has taken place.

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Independent Speakers, Performers, and Open Artistic Expression

- Members of the university community must complete the [Freedom of Expression Request Form](#) five business days in advance of an activity that is open to the entire campus community (not required for closed classroom speakers and guests). Events may not be advertised until they are fully approved.
- University representative will respond within two business days with acknowledgement and to schedule meeting.
- Members of the university community must complete the [Event Registration Form](#) at least seven days in advance of an event.
- Organizers must schedule a meeting with the appropriate university designee to review details of the event.
- Any applicable contact should be included in the submission and discussed in the planning meeting.
- University designee will be present to support implementation of open expression activity.
- The university reserves the right to cancel the event for health, safety, and welfare of the university community, adequate timing, or other concerns with the event.
- The university reserves the right at all time to require insurance acceptable to the University.

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ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Role	Responsibility
Vice President & Dean of Students, Student Engagement and Transformation	Approves Freedom of Expression Activities for the University
Office of Student Engagement	Approves all Chester campus public posting or campus chalking requests for the University

RELATED DOCUMENTS, POLICIES, AND FORMS

- [Freedom of Expression Request Form](#)
- [Public Posting Policy and Request Form](#)
- [Campus Chalking Policy and Request Form](#)
- [Event Registration Form](#)

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September 15, 2025.

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