

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE:

Freedom of speech and expression is essential to the academic enterprise, inherent in such key elements as academic freedom, diversity of viewpoint, and the necessity of being able to hear and speak views not held by the majority. This civic value is essential to democracy itself, and for that reason is protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Despite this, in the past few years conflicts over the scope and limitations of the constitutionally-protected freedom of speech have emerged on campuses across the country, often resulting in disruption of permitted on-campus activities and occasionally in violence and even death. It is therefore timely for the university community to engage in a conversation about freedom of expression and its role in the university community, with the goal of producing a statement of university values regarding freedom of expression.

WORK DEFINITION:

Establish a university task force to develop and propose for adoption a statement of university values regarding freedom of expression. The task force would consist of ten people: three students, two faculty, two other staff, and three administrators, those last three being University General Council and Board Secretary Chris Burford, Vice President for Advancement Tim Seydel, and Vice President for Student Affairs Lacy Karpilo.

DELIVERABLES/END PRODUCTS:

1. Review:
 - a. The role of free speech and expression in the academic enterprise and
 - b. In democratic institutions in general,
 - c. Legal standards setting the outer sideboards on free speech activities,
 - d. Recent conflicts at other institutions, and
 - e. Statements on freedom of expression issued by other institutions.
2. Draft a statement of EOU values regarding freedom of expression at EOU.
3. Conduct meetings to review and refine the statement.
4. Finalize a recommended statement by the end of Winter Term.

KEY MILESTONES:

Finalize a recommended statement by the end of Winter Term.

CONSTRAINTS:

Use existing resources. Statement length should not exceed two pages.

KEY ASSUMPTIONS:

The task force's work product will be presented to the University Council for comment and review prior to finalization.

SPECIFICALLY EXCLUDED SCOPE:

The work product will be a statement of values, but not a formal University Policy as defined in the Policy on University Policies.