

University Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Campus Free Expression

November 21, 2025

Background

Ohio State's most recent effort to think broadly and judiciously about the regulation of campus speech—and the balance between our speech rights and responsibilities—took place between 1968 and 1971. Some fifty years later, it is time to revisit important questions of rules and guardrails around speech on campus. Over the past several years, OSU has faced vexing questions about the limits of campus free expression. In response, the university has reformed the campus time/place/manner restrictions on free speech but has done so with limited shared governance consultation. This is part of a broader trend of turning toward discretionary “small-p” policies—disconnected from our shared governance structures—to regulate university life.

The university's reluctance to consistently include campus constituents in important questions of free expression does not mean that we in shared governance have no right, or obligation, to thoughtfully engage. Speech policies, like other policies that affect a wide range of university constituents, should be discussed and decided upon through robust shared governance processes.

Below is a proposal for a collaborative ad hoc committee which would work to strengthen Ohio State's commitment to campus expression. Although the committee would necessarily review recent events and policy changes, its charge would be forward-looking, aimed at fostering genuine conversations around how we can best support free speech and inquiry on campus in these challenging times.

Committee Charge

The Ad Hoc Committee will engage in consultation with OSU community members and will examine OSU's governing documents and processes related to speech, with the goal of clarifying our speech policies, prioritizing campus free inquiry and expression, and supporting and ensuring consistent and viewpoint-neutral enforcement.

To that end, the committee shall:

- Consult with faculty, students and staff, and with relevant University Senate committees (CAFR, CSA, etc) and other campus stakeholders
- Review federal, state and university policies governing free speech and academic freedom, and their enforcement. These shall include but are not limited to:
 - American Council on Education (ACE) Statement on Academic Rights and Responsibilities, endorsed by OSU in 2006.
 - The university's institutional neutrality statement
 - Campus Free Speech policy
 - Faculty Rule 3335-5-01 (Academic Freedom and Responsibility), 3335-5-04 (Faculty Misconduct) and 3335-11 (Disruption); and Code of Student Conduct (Ohio Administrative Code 3335-23)
 - University Space Standards
 - University Signage Standards
 - University Political Activities Guidelines
 - OSU's Freedom of Expression website
 - OSU's policies governing speech in other spaces (libraries, dorms, digital spaces, etc)
 - OSU's SB1 Compliance website and SB1 toolkit
 - The federal and state regulatory landscape with respect to speech, including DOE and DOJ guidance

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- Based on an analysis of these and other sources, as well as recent speech-related events on campus, assess constraints on speech and, where relevant, suggest improvements for their protection.
- Recommend strategies for improving shared governance's role in supporting these freedoms.
- Review Faculty Rule 3335-11 as well as relevant state laws, university rules, and university policies. Recommend possible revisions to this rule as well as best practices for how the university can respond to instances of campus protest.
- Produce a written report describing the committee's findings and recommendations and share them with Faculty Council and/or Senate.

Voting Committee Members:

- Delara Cama (Undergraduate Student Government; Public Health and ASC)
- Sabrina Durso (Council of Graduate Students; ASC)
- Marin Funderberg (Undergraduate Student Government; Glenn College and ASC)
- Lydia Gokey (Council of Graduate Students; ASC)
- Nader Maarouf (Inter-Professional Council, College of Medicine)
- Ben McKean (Faculty, Social & Behavioral Sciences; AAUP Committee A Chair)
- Ramsey Piazza (USAC, Office of Academic Affairs)
- Dylan Ramey (Inter-Professional Council, Moritz College of Law)
- Dakota Rudesill (Faculty Council, Moritz College of Law)
- Sara Watson (Faculty Council and Senate Steering, Social & Behavioral Sciences)

Ex-Officio:

- Jared Gardner (Secretary of the University Senate)
- Jan Neiger (Office of Academic Affairs)
- Other guests will be invited on an ad hoc basis to share their expertise and experience.