

## **Plan for forming the University Committee for the Promotion of Free Expression**

### **I. The Committee's purpose**

Freedom of expression is crucial to the mission of the University of Denver. Absent a commitment to freedom of expression, the University could neither pursue its three core goals of promoting community, learning, and scholarship, nor promote its key values: excellence, innovation, engagement, integrity, and inclusiveness. To claim that freedom of expression is crucial to our values and goals is not, however, to ignore the fact that a commitment to speech can, on occasion, create tension within those same values and goals, as recent events across the country and on our own campus have shown. In a society confronting social, racial, gender, religious, economic, and other inequalities, where historically some voices and some communities have been marginalized, excluded, or silenced, a commitment to free speech must, at the same time, include a commitment to inclusiveness, to insure that all members of our community feel equally welcome to participate in discourse and receive divergent information.

Recognizing the central importance of freedom of expression to our educational mission, the Faculty Senate last year voted to adopt a motion, The University of Denver Statement of Policy and Principles on Freedom of Expression. This motion was the product of more than a year's work by a committee of faculty from across campus. In addition to defining DU policy and principles on matters related to freedom of expression, the statement also charges the Senate with appointing a University Committee for the Promotion of Free Expression. The Committee will be charged with the following:

1. proactively creating forums for meaningful, responsible engagement of diverse and opposing viewpoints among all campus constituencies, particularly concerning the types of issues that are likely to lead to tensions on campus;
2. addressing such conflicts as they arise in ways that aim to resolve them in a manner that increases dialogue, respects speakers of diverse viewpoints, and seeks to heal and build community;
3. when requested, assisting the University in examining issues of freedom of expression.

Taken together, these charges empower the Committee to serve a fundamental educational purpose: to cultivate amongst constituencies across campus a deep understanding of and appreciation for the value of freedom of expression, particularly as that value intersects with other, equally central DU values, notably diversity and inclusivity.

### **II. What does the Committee do?**

To fulfill its purpose, the Committee shall draw its members from the faculty, student body, members of staff, and administrators. It shall sponsor or cosponsor ongoing programming and

educational resources; collaborate with sponsors of specific events on campus, as they occur; and review complaints.

#### **A. Creates programming and educational resources**

The Committee shall work with entities on campus such as Student Life, Faculty Senate, and others invested in freedom of expression issues to create dialogues around the concept of freedom of expression, its relationship to other central DU values, and about University policy.

The Committee shall also work with experts on campus to create educational materials about the responsible practice of free expression on our campus.

#### **B. Helps to plan events and to reflect upon them**

As members of the campus community plan debates, demonstrations, visits from potentially controversial speakers, and other events wherein issues of freedom of expression may arise, the Committee will advise on ways to design events such as to respect the value of free expression and of inclusion. The Committee shall also serve as a response team, committed to addressing issues of free expression in real time.

#### **C. Reviews and reports**

The Committee shall review cases brought before it by individuals alleging that freedom of expression has been unjustifiably curtailed or that expression has been practiced in ways that diminish or conflict with other DU values. When appropriate, it shall issue reports on these cases to the campus bodies charged with adjudicating them.

### **III. The composition of the Committee**

#### **A. Committee structure**

- Faculty Senate President, Incoming or Immediate Past Senate President, Staff Advisory Council President, Undergraduate Student Government President, Graduate Student Government President
- Standing Ex Officio Members-Director of Campus Safety, Vice Chancellor of Campus Life and Inclusive Excellence, University Counsel, 4–6 campus community members (depending on the pool and their qualifications)

#### **B. Selection of Committee members**

*Selection Committee:* Current & Incoming or Immediate Past Faculty Senate President, plus Staff Advisory Council President, Undergraduate Student Government President, Graduate Student Government President

Faculty Senate President issues an open call to the entire campus, inviting applicants. Applicants send a letter of interest for the University Committee for the Promotion of Free Expression that addresses their position on campus, their motivation for serving on the Committee, how they meet the desired qualities of Committee members, and relevant previous experience. The Selection Committee reviews applications, interviews finalists, and selects candidates. Then the Senate Executive Committee reviews and approves the Committee members.

### **C. Commitment of Committee members**

The Committee will meet 1–2 times/quarter. Additionally, the Committee, including the ex officio members, will be available within an eight-hour response time when urgent issues arises.

Committee members will serve one-year terms with the option to reapply for a total service of up to three years.

### **D. Desired qualities of Committee members**

In keeping with our Faculty Senate’s commitment to diversity, broadly conceived, in committee compositions, additional criteria includes:

- Familiarity or willingness to learn about issues surrounding freedom of expression on college campuses
- Familiarity or willingness to learn about designing dialogic and deliberative forums on campus—forums capable of hosting difficult conversations in such a way as to maintain robust commitments to inclusivity and freedom of expression
- Understanding of and experience with various constituencies and viewpoints on campus