

Contact: Mark Braun

FREE SPEECH COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Action Requested: Approve the recommendations submitted by the Free Speech Committee.

Executive Summary: On November 28, 2020, Board President Michael Richards established a Free Speech Committee to the Board of Regents with the following charge: evaluate the implementation of the Board's policy, as well as best practices from other institutions, and bring any recommendations on changes that need to be made to strengthen our efforts on free speech. President Richards's made the following statement at the November 2020 Board Meeting about Free Expression:

Everyone has the right to express their own opinion. Disagreeing on issues and having a respectful debate about those issues should happen on our university campuses. What should not happen is preventing another person or group's opinion from being expressed or threatening those opinions with possible repercussions. This is not who we are, and it is not right.

Since its creation, the Free Speech Committee has met throughout the winter. The following are the recommendations from the Free Speech Committee:

1. Each syllabus will have a statement comparable to the ISU statement:
Iowa State University supports and upholds the First Amendment protection of freedom of speech and the principle of academic freedom in order to foster a learning environment where open inquiry and the vigorous debate of a diversity of ideas are encouraged. Students will not be penalized for the content or viewpoints of their speech as long as student expression in a class context is germane to the subject matter of the class and conveyed in an appropriate manner.
2. The syllabus free speech statement will be reviewed at the beginning of each course.
3. Reaffirm that university resources will not be used for partisan activities. Registered student organizations and individual students will still be able to utilize university facilities and email.
4. The universities may only take an institutional position on policy matters, in conjunction with the Board. This includes presidents, vice presidents, deans and department directors.
5. Universities will not permit discrimination or denial of educational benefits because of the viewpoint of a student organization or a student.
6. Establish the Free Speech Committee as a permanent committee of the Board of Regents to review free speech complaints passed along by the Executive Director, annually review all free speech policies of the Board and universities, review the university training for improvements and every two years do a survey on free speech to all faculty, staff and students.
7. Universities will be required to post the Board's and university policies and procedures on their webpage, including how to appeal to the Board regarding violations of free expression.

8. Universities will be charged with adding policies and procedures, including penalties for violations of free expression to its current process for violations of university or Board policies.
9. The Board of Regents will review and compile data from the most recent campus climate surveys and national surveys regarding free speech. The Free Speech Committee will determine if additional survey of all members of each university regarding free speech is warranted during the fall semester 2021. Once completed this information will be presented to the Board.
10. Universities will be required to provide training on the free speech to all students, faculty and staff on an annual basis. The presidents will appoint the appropriate campus members to assist the Free Speech Committee to develop a common module for free speech at all three universities.