

Contact: Rachel Boon

SYLLABUS STATEMENTS

Action Requested: Review the free expression syllabus statements from each university.

Background: On February 24, 2021, the Board of Regents approved a set of Free Speech recommendations to be implemented by the Board and the universities. The first recommendation of the Free Speech Committee was that each institution would have a syllabus statement comparable to the one developed by Iowa State University in Fall 2020.

At its meeting on April 14, 2021, the Board approved Board policy 1.2.D that includes a requirement to “annually review all free speech policies and procedures of the Board and the universities to assure cross-institutional consistency and compliance with the law.”

This report includes the statements that each university has developed and approved for use on all syllabi, as well as some information on the process used to create these statements. In all cases, General Counsel, the Office of the Provost, Faculty Senate and other campus constituents provided input. In addition, university representatives conferred with each other throughout the process to assure cross-institutional consistency, fidelity to the Board of Regents intent, and compliance with federal and state law.

Iowa State University

On November 11, 2020, Provost Wickert sent a communication to all ISU faculty that shared a new syllabus statement on Free Expression that would be required on the syllabus for all classes. This requirement was effective for the winter session of 2020-21, and the statement has not been changed since that time. The Faculty Senate Executive Board provided consultation in the development of the statement, and department chairs were tasked with ensuring the information was provided to graduate student instructors and teaching assistants.

The statement was designed to affirm existing Iowa State University's commitment to free expression and all existing policies. It reads:

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.

University of Northern Iowa

The University of Northern Iowa began working on a Free Expression syllabus statement in February 2021 with a process led by the Provost's office but including many campus constituents and experts. Campus discussions were informed by the ISU statement and ongoing communication with the University of Iowa as a statement was developed there simultaneously. On April 26, 2021, the Faculty Senate approved the following statement to be used in all classes, effective summer 2021:

The University of Northern Iowa supports and upholds the First Amendment protection of freedom of speech and the principles of academic and artistic freedom. We encourage the free and responsible exchange of diverse ideas on our campus. The University is committed to open inquiry and the spirited and thoughtful debate of such ideas.

University of Iowa

A campus committee on free speech issues was formed in November 2020 and work began in December 2020. A sub-committee was assigned to address policy issues, which included development of a syllabus statement. This sub-committee worked with the SUI Faculty Senate, using the ISU syllabus statement as a template. Some modest revisions were made to the ISU template resulting in the following approved syllabus statement to be required on all course syllabi starting in summer 2021:

The University of Iowa supports and upholds the First Amendment protection of freedom of speech and the principles of academic and artistic freedom. We are committed to open inquiry, vigorous debate, and creative expression inside and outside of the classroom. For information on the university's policies on free speech and academic freedom, see <https://freespeech.uiowa.edu>.