

# **THE UNIVERSITY OF AKRON**

## **RESOLUTION 6-13-19**

### **Pertaining to Free Speech/Expression on Campus**

WHEREAS, There have been multiple events on university campuses, and especially, political speakers and demonstrators who have made visits to such campuses over the past several years, which have raised questions about the status of free speech on American university campuses; and

WHEREAS, The free speech policy statement produced by the Committee for Freedom of Expression at the University of Chicago has become a model for many universities' affirmation of free speech and academic freedom across the country since its publication in 2015; and

WHEREAS, The Chicago Statement<sup>1</sup> has been adopted or endorsed by a large number of faculty bodies and institutions across the United States; and

WHEREAS, Faculty Senate adopted a Resolution on April 4, 2019 (the "Resolution") regarding Free Speech/Expression on Campus and forwarded the Resolution to Interim President John Green ("Interim President Green") for a consideration and response; and

WHEREAS, Interim President Green forwarded the Resolution to the Office of General Counsel, which reviewed and approved the Resolution as to legal form and sufficiency; and

WHEREAS, Interim President Green also forwarded the Resolution to the Office of Academic Affairs, which sent the Resolution to University Council for its consideration and response; and

WHEREAS, The University Council endorsed the Resolution by unanimous vote at its meeting on May 28, 2019; and

WHEREAS, Interim President Green now has forwarded the Resolution for consideration by The University of Akron (the "University") Board of Trustees (the "Board"); and

WHEREAS, The Board firmly supports academic freedom and free speech on campus and has incorporated those ideals in to University Rule 3359-44-01 and in Article 9, "Academic Freedom, Rights, and Responsibilities" in the collective bargaining agreement between the University and the Akron Chapter of the American Association of University Professors; and

WHEREAS, The Board agrees with the ideals expressed in the Resolution; Now, Therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, That the Board endorses the following statement on freedom of expression, adapted from the University of Chicago statement:

“Because the University of Akron is committed to free and open inquiry in all matters, it guarantees all members of the University community the broadest possible latitude to speak, write, listen, challenge, and learn. Except insofar as limitations on that freedom are necessary to the functioning of the University, the University of Akron fully respects and supports the freedom of all members of the University community to discuss any problem that presents itself.

Of course, the ideas of different members of the collegiate community will often and quite naturally conflict. But it is not the proper role of the University to attempt to shield individuals from ideas and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable, or even deeply offensive. Although the University greatly values civility, and although all members of the University community share in the responsibility for maintaining a climate of mutual respect, concerns about civility and mutual respect can never be used as a justification for closing off discussion of ideas, however offensive or disagreeable those ideas may be to some members of our community.

The University of Akron may restrict expression that: violates the law, falsely defames a specific individual, constitutes a genuine threat or harassment, unjustifiably invades substantial privacy or confidentiality interests, or is otherwise directly incompatible with the University’s functioning. The University of Akron should retain the commensurate right to regulate reasonably the time, place, and manner of expression to ensure that it does not disrupt any ordinary university activities. But these regulations and exceptions cannot ever compromise the institution’s commitment to a completely free and open discussion of ideas.

As a corollary to the University of Akron’s commitment to protect and promote free expression, communities associated with the University of Akron must also act in conformity with the principle of free expression. Although members of the University community are free to criticize and contest the views expressed on campuses, and to criticize and contest speakers who are invited to express their views on campuses, they may not obstruct or otherwise interfere with the freedom of others to express views they reject or even loathe. To this end, universities have a solemn responsibility not only to promote a lively and fearless freedom of debate and deliberation, but also to protect that freedom when others attempt to restrict it.”



A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "M. Celeste Cook", is positioned above the typed name.

M. Celeste Cook, Secretary  
Board of Trustees

<sup>1</sup> For the full text of the Chicago Principles, please see the following:  
<https://provost.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/documents/reports/FOECommitteeReport.pdf>