

## Communications Council discussion notes: Freedom of Expression Workgroup Recommendations and Reflections for UC Davis Communicators

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*These are discussion notes—for official guidance please see the links at the bottom of this document.*

- All universities are realizing they need to educate students further on 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment. Some invited speakers are provocateurs and intend to offend students, so the students are in a difficult position—particularly marginalized groups. So, when we communicate we need to empower students and advocate for their issues, as well as educate them about the First Amendment freedom of expression rights.
- This topic is a national issue, but two specific incidents spurred committee formation by Interim Chancellor Hexter:
  - Israeli diplomat whose stage was occupied by protestors
  - Milo Y.—speech canceled by student group who invited him shortly before it was scheduled to begin because it was not safe to allow event to proceed
- Important to understand when examining this issue that people tend to recognize their own First Amendment rights but do not as readily recognize the rights of those they disagree with
- The issue has become more acute in part because of the internet. Extremists who might not have had the same visibility in the past have gotten it from the Internet.
- Protest inclinations of students haven't changed over time, but what has changed is that there's a more recent expectation that administrators will intervene in preventing extreme speakers.
- Where the speech occurs matters. Public forum: freedom of expression rights are the highest. Examples are like a public park, in front of city hall, or for us, the Quad. Only restricted by time/space/manner. We have restrictions on when amplified sound is used, elevated platform heights, etc. In an inside event with specific parameters, you have more control and can ask people to leave if those parameters are violated.
- Once a speaker has reserved the podium, they have the right to talk, and the audience has a right to listen to the invited speaker, even if the speaker is controversial.
- An issue that has proved difficult for people to understand is that there isn't any obligation to have an opposing viewpoint.
- UC Davis [created a website called "Student" Expression that](#) clarifies 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment rights on campus.
- If you have a situation with a controversial speaker, make sure you have an MC who understands the rights of everyone and can use effective situational management techniques.

- We need to keep the topic active on campus so we are prepared when the next incident occurs. As an example, there's a first-year seminar on this topic at School of Law. The committee produced a set of recommendations on how to keep the discussion active.
- Be prepared and as consistent as possible in responses to avoid getting in a difficult position.

Resources:

<https://www.ucdavis.edu/news/uc-davis-outlines-blueprint-freedom-expression-campus/>

<http://studentexpression.ucdavis.edu>