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Faculty Senate Resolution 16-01

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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FACULTY SENATE RESOLUTION 16-01

Freedom of Expression on Campus

Sponsored by Lillian Bridwell-Bowles, James R. Stoner, Jr, Austin Allen, Griffin Campbell, Joseph Clare, Christine Corcos, William Daly, Louis Day, John Devlin, Femi Euba, Cecil Eubanks, Carl Freedman, James Garand, Angeletta Gourdine, Robert Hogan, Dominique Homberger, Vincent LiCata, Suzanne Marchand, Andrew Maverick, Ken McMillin, Pam Monroe, Petra Hendry Munro, Lance Porter, Leonard Ray, Jeff Roland, Alan Sikes, Mary Sirridge, Joseph Skillen, George Stanley, Victor Stater, Muhammed Wahab, Michelle Zerba

Whereas controversies concerning freedom of speech and expression have arisen on university campuses around the country;

Whereas the LSU community is united by a shared commitment to the unfettered search for truth and respect for academic freedom --which encompasses the freedom to teach and to learn, to listen and to express ideas;

Whereas these two values, freedom of speech and academic freedom, must not be sacrificed even as the University appropriately promotes civility and respect;

Whereas clarification of widely accepted principles of free expression could serve as a guide to administrators, faculty, and students faced with specific issues;

Whereas it would serve us well to clarify consensus principles of freedom of expression on campus before the heat of any particular controversy sets people at odds; and

Whereas a compelling statement of principles has been prepared at the [University of Chicago](#)ⁱ and endorsed by the faculty of [Princeton University](#),ⁱⁱ

BE IT RESOLVED that the LSU Faculty Senate affirm the common statement of the University of Chicago and Princeton University on freedom of expression, to wit:

Because the University 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 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 University 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 freedom to debate and discuss the merits of competing ideas does not, of course, mean that individuals may say whatever they wish, wherever they wish. The University may restrict expression that violates the law, that falsely defames a specific individual, that constitutes a genuine threat or harassment, that unjustifiably invades substantial privacy or confidentiality interests, or that is otherwise directly incompatible with the functioning of the University. In addition, the University may reasonably regulate the time, place, and manner of expression to ensure that it does not disrupt the ordinary activities of the University. But these are narrow exceptions to the general principle of freedom of expression, and it is vitally important that these exceptions never be used in a manner that is inconsistent with the University's commitment to a completely free and open discussion of ideas.

In a word, the University's fundamental commitment is to the principle that debate or deliberation may not be suppressed because the ideas put forth are thought by some or even by most members of the University community to be offensive, unwise, immoral, or wrong-headed. It is for the individual members of the University community, not for the University as an institution, to make those judgments for themselves, and to act on those judgments not by seeking to suppress speech, but by openly and vigorously contesting the ideas that they oppose. Indeed, fostering the ability of members of the University community to engage in such debate and deliberation in an effective and responsible manner is an essential part of the University's educational mission.

As a corollary to the University's commitment to protect and promote free expression, members of the University community 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 campus, and to criticize and contest speakers who are invited to express their views on campus, they may not obstruct or otherwise interfere with the freedom of others to express views they reject or even loathe. To this end, the University has 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.

And be it further resolved that the Senate urge the University to adopt these principles as policy and incorporate them into the official Policy Statements of the University.

ⁱ Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression, the University of Chicago, January 2015 <
<http://provost.uchicago.edu/FOECommitteeReport.pdf>>

ⁱⁱ "Faculty adopts statement affirming commitment to freedom of expression at Princeton," *News at Princeton*, April 7, 2015
<<https://www.princeton.edu/main/news/archive/S42/84/36147/index.xml?section=topstories>>