

CAMPUS EXPRESSION

Policy

Mount Mercy University is committed to creating a thriving intellectual experience for our students, faculty, staff, and community. The ability to express oneself freely, debate vigorously, and engage deeply with differing viewpoints is essential to the Mission of Mount Mercy. Every member of our community has an obligation to support free and open inquiry and expression on our campus and to refrain from actions that reduce intellectual discussion. To do otherwise is to fail to meet the purpose for which this institution was founded. We affirm our Catholic Mercy character and promote academic freedom. We hold these ideas to be the essential, beneficial, and mutually reinforcing perspectives upon which our intellectual tradition exists.

I. Values-based Expression

Catholic Mercy Perspective:

We uphold Mount Mercy University's identity as a Catholic institution of higher learning guided by the educational mission laid out in *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. We aim to educate the whole person, follow the Catholic Intellectual Tradition, and promote Catholic Social Teaching.

We honor the Practical Wisdom of Catherine McAuley, the tradition of the Sisters of Mercy, and the Covenant of the Conference for Mercy Higher Education, prioritizing their values. We practice hospitality, which invites an openness to our community, graciousness, and inclusion that welcomes all people and a multitude of perspectives. We prize the pursuit of truth and dignity, which fosters free inquiry in a compassionate culture where our dedication to faith, truth, and mercy supports the dignity of each person within the human community.

Academic Freedom & Freedom of Expression Perspective:

We embrace academic freedom as essential to the life of the university. The mission of a university offering baccalaureate and graduate degrees is to expand human knowledge through the unfettered sifting and winnowing of ideas in pursuit of the

truth. Both academic freedom and freedom of expression are an integral part of the search for truth. A university can only function when a wide range of perspectives are allowed to come into contact with one another.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity Perspective:

We adhere to the promises made in Mount Mercy’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity values statement. We cultivate inclusivity and foster diversity that supports human well-being. We affirm all people as persons, whatever their age, race, ethnicity, sex, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, immigration status, nationality, religion, ability, or any other identity. We denounce all acts of hatred and seek to build equity for all. Direct attacks upon, and acts of discrimination against, legally protected classes (age, race, color, ethnicity, sex, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, immigration status, nationality, religion, and ability) violate the Values of Mount Mercy.

II. General Policy

- a. Mount Mercy University is committed to free and open inquiry. We seek to develop reflective judgment in our students. By necessity, this requires a knowledge of basic fact, examination of assumptions, adequate justification for drawing a conclusion, and understanding the implications of drawing that conclusion. This can only occur with access to a multitude of thoughts, viewpoints, and voices. We will strive to make those thoughts, opinions and voices accessible to all in our community.
- b. Mount Mercy recognizes that with a wide array of expression there will exist conflict in thoughts and viewpoints. Even controversial and unpopular ideas will be protected on our campus. We choose not to insulate our students and community from ideas, but to expose them to broad range of ideas – some of which may be counter to their current beliefs. We do not judge ideas to suppress, instead we encourage vigorous discussion and dialogue.
- c. This does not mean that all expression on the Mount Mercy campus is without limit. Expression that falls into the following categories exist outside of the protections of this policy and are prohibited.
 - i. Expression that violates the law
 - ii. Expression that intends to harmfully disparage a specific member of the campus community
 - iii. Expression that constitutes a threat against an individual or group
 - iv. Expression that violates Mount Mercy’s code of conduct regarding harassment
 - v. Expression that invades privacy or confidentiality

- vi. Expression that violates the Values-based expression perspectives of Mount Mercy University that are stated above in Section II.
- d. These are narrow limitations, but are necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of our campus community.
- e. While we support a broad freedom of expression, that freedom does not equal the freedom from consequences that arise from that expression. We encourage all campus members to engage in reflective judgment and strategic communication regarding the content, location, and medium of public expressions.
- f. This policy does not extend to members of the public who enter the Mount Mercy campus. This policy is only for the members of the Mount Mercy community and their officially invited guests.
- g. Nothing in this policy limits or modifies the Academic Freedom of faculty members with regard to the speech/expression that takes place in their classes or class-related activities that are not made open to the Mount Mercy community.

III. Specific Locations

a. Protected Spaces

Mount Mercy protects sacred and safe spaces already established for specific kinds of discourse on campus, including the Chapel of Mercy and its foyer, the JEDI room, the Janalyn Hanson White Gallery, the Counseling Center, and the Olson Marriage and Family Therapy Clinic. The Chapel is a sacred space for those participating in worship. The JEDI room is a dedicated space for those whose voices have been historically repressed or under-represented. The Gallery is managed by the art faculty to host specifically designed exhibitions and is not intended for open use by the Mount Mercy Community. The Counseling Center and Olson Clinic are dedicated to creating a safe and welcoming environment for those seeking professional mental health services. These designated spaces are subject to special scrutiny when evaluating the where, when, and why of any expression.

b. Tunnels

The walls, floor, and ceiling of the tunnels are subject to the same limitations for open expression as any other wall, ceiling, door, or floor on campus. Individuals are not permitted to deface Mount Mercy property.

However, as part of enrollment in some Art and Design courses, students may be assigned to add art pieces to select walls of the tunnels. The Main Tunnel from Warde Hall to McAuley Hall and the tunnel from Basile Hall to the Main Tunnel may be used for this. The Art and Design faculty has the authority to approve and regulate these installations.

In addition, the administration may continue to use select areas for class recognitions, as is currently being done between Donnelly Center and Hennessey Recreation Center. The administration may make other additions as it sees appropriate. The tunnel walls between McAuley and the Busse Center are best served for this. Any inquiries into additions to the Tunnel Wall should be made to the Events Manager or Dean of Students.

c. Campus Bulletin Boards

Nothing in this policy prohibits or prevents the Mount Mercy staff from regulating the process by which items are added to, and removed from, the public bulletin boards designated for campus notices.

IV. Events

- a. As has been the case at Mount Mercy, faculty, staff, and student organizations are permitted to request space for events and speakers. Nothing in this policy is intended to change the procedures currently in effect. Faculty, staff, and student organizations must follow the proper established procedure in order to reserve space for events and speakers.
- b. We look to ensure that guest speakers on campus have a full understanding of the Mount Mercy community. Therefore, a document, “Mount Mercy Values – for our Guests” has been created. This document, which includes the Mission and Values of the University, as well as the Principles of this Campus Expression Policy, is a resource for invited speakers. Student organizations, faculty, and staff are required to forward the document to any guest speakers/presenters/performers that they invite to campus for public events. This requirement does not include guests invited by faculty as classroom lecturers that are not open to others in the Mount Mercy community.

V. Protests

- a. An individual or group wishing to peacefully protest at an event may do so as long as any speaker’s right to free speech and the audience’s right to see and to hear a speaker are not violated. Protesting in a public forum or in the media are expressions of free speech, not university benefits extended to individuals.
- b. Protestors who are members of the Mount Mercy community will be allowed entrance into any university building, unless they are disturbing university activities such as class or office work. They will be able to stay in the building until the building is closed for the day, or until the office or area closes for business that day. Entrance into the building does not mean entrance into any or all offices or classrooms.

VI. Handling Disputed Expression

- a. Mount Mercy shall have a Campus Expression Committee, which will be chaired by the Provost or the Provost's designee. The membership shall include three elected faculty members, the Vice-President for Mission & Ministry or her/his designee, the Director of Marketing/Communication, the Dean of Students, and two students, one appointed by the SGA and one appointed by the University President. The membership of this committee and this policy will be posted on the Mount Mercy website in an appropriate location.
- b. Violations of the Campus Expression Policy may arise in the form of expression or the limitation of expression; the committee will address both types of alleged violations. Whenever there is an allegation of a violation of the Campus Expression Policy, the complaining community member shall bring the complaint to the Chair in a timely manner through an online form. On the form, the complainant will list their name, contact information, the offending expression, and the specific Campus Expression Policy rule that is alleged to be violated.
- c. After receiving the complaint, the Chair will be in contact with the complainant and determine whether the matter violates the Expression Policy. If it clearly does not, the Chair may attempt to resolve the matter on her/his own. Should that occur, the Chair is required to notify the committee of the matter and of the resolution. If an amicable resolution is possible, that is encouraged. Should four members of the committee decide that the entire committee is necessary to decide the matter, the Chair will be required to convene a meeting as described below.
- d. If the Chair determines that there potentially was a violation of the Campus Expression Policy, the Chair shall contact all committee members to convene a meeting as soon as possible, using technology when appropriate. When appropriate and necessary, the committee will solicit the knowledge and opinions of individuals with experience or education in a relevant field. It is understood that time is of the essence. For the sake of speed, there may be instances when all committee members are not present for a meeting.
- e. The committee, acting with appropriate diligence and thoroughness, will investigate to determine if a violation occurred and what, if any, actions are necessary to be taken. Prior to any finding of a violation of the policy, the Committee must meet with the respondent. The committee will only address steps necessary to address the speech, not the respondent. If a situation were to arise where disciplinary steps were necessary, those would proceed through the appropriate office (Student Affairs, Provost, or Human Resources). The Chair will inform the relevant parties of the outcome and inform the President of the matter and decision.

- f. Any formal, or informal, appeal of the committee’s decision shall be made to the President of the University. The President shall sit as the final arbiter of the expression in question and have final say of any actions that need to be taken by the University.

VII. Mount Mercy Values – for our Guests

The information below shall be provided to guest speakers in a document in advance of their arrival.

Mount Mercy’s Mission

Mount Mercy is a Catholic University that provides student-focused education in the spirit of the Sisters of Mercy and welcomes people of all beliefs to join our community in pursuit of baccalaureate and graduate education and compassionate service to those in need. We strive for excellence in accomplishing our mission through four interdependent goals: using reflective judgment, engaging in strategic communication, serving the common good, and promoting purposeful living.

Mount Mercy’s Values

Lifelong learning and education of the whole person

We believe that education is a lifelong experience where learning empowers the whole person, intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

Pursuit of truth and dignity

We foster free inquiry in a compassionate culture where our dedication to faith, truth, and mercy supports the dignity of each person within the human community.

Commitment to students

We acknowledge and affirm that our students’ needs are central to decisions that affect community life.

Justice

We advocate for equality by actively creating just and healthy relationships in our learning community and our global society.

Gratitude

We celebrate with humility all gifts and talents bestowed by God and faithfully share these blessings with the wider community.

Hospitality

We accomplish our work in the spirit of Catharine McAuley's graciousness and inclusion that welcomes all people and perspectives.

Service

We instill a sense of responsibility and caring that calls us to serve the common good.

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