



First Amendment



The open exchange of ideas is the foundation of a great university. Universities are places for discourse, debate and learning from different views, experiences, and knowledge of other people.

What is freedom of speech and what does it protect?

Freedom of speech is essential to a strong democracy. The First Amendment generally prevents the government – which includes CSU as a public university – from controlling what people say or limiting their expression.

The First Amendment guarantees your right to speak and express yourself. It gives you power to control what you think and freedom to say what you want.

The First Amendment does not, however, give you the right to control what other people think or say, or limit their expression. It doesn't guarantee that other people have to listen or

agree with you, and it doesn't give anyone the right to silence the free speech rights of others through threats, intimidation or violence.

Other people also have the right to speak their ideas and debate your ideas, or just to ignore you.

Universities are places for the exchange of ideas, discourse, and debate – learning from the different views, experiences, and knowledge of other people, including those who disagree. So it's important to know the rules and responsibilities that go along with your rights.

CSU speech-related policies

- [Free Speech and Peaceful Assembly](#)
- [Special Events on University Property](#)
- [Signs, Posters, Banners and Flyers](#)
- [Sales and Solicitations on University Property](#)

What is speech?

- Expression of ideas, perspectives and values
- Peaceful protests or demonstrations
- Clothing
- Posters or flyers
- Refraining from speaking

See more about the [First Amendment at the CSU System](#).

Watch Pres. Parsons lead a [panel discussion](#) that provides a primer on the First Amendment and higher education.

Your Voice

Your voice has power, and you can use it to have an impact on your world and the issues that matter to you. Most speech is protected, some is not – knowing the difference and what you can do gives you power to make your voice heard.

CSU is required by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution to have an open exchange of ideas and dissenting points of view, even when such expression might be deemed

offensive and runs counter to our **Principles of Community** or other institutional values. It is important to remember that embracing free speech is a core value, and our Principles of Community declare that the university is “committed to freedom of expression, critical discourse, and the advancement of knowledge.” We also uphold the rights of our university community to present counter narratives through peaceful means.

Use your voice:

- Use social media to express your views
- Talk with friends and classmates
- Organize a petition drive
- Email or phone your local, state, or federal representatives
- Join a **peaceful gathering or protest**
- Write a letter to the editor
- Find a club that’s focused on an issue you care about – or create one
- Volunteer with local, regional, or national civic groups that address issues you care about
- Get involved with **ASCSU**, your student government, or your faculty or staff councils
- Write your university president or other leaders
- **Vote!**

First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

It’s important to:

- Educate yourself about the issues, both pro and con
- Consider your own arguments through a critical lens
- Listen
- Set and be respectful of your own boundaries and the boundaries of others
- Get out of your comfort zone and get into the learning zone by considering perspectives and arguments that contradict your own
- Prioritize your **well-being, particularly when pushing your comfort zones**
- Remember that we all come from varying experiences and backgrounds, which shape our perspectives in different ways
- Learn the **difference between dialogue and debate**
- Remember that freedom of speech is not freedom from consequences

- Keep in mind that criminal threats and harassment of individuals, as well as violence, are not protected speech
- Recognize that the First Amendment protects your right to express yourself AND it equally protects the rights of others to express themselves, even if you strongly disagree with their speech

Colleges:

- Agricultural Sciences
- Business
- Walter Scott, Jr. College of Engineering
- Health and Human Sciences
- Liberal Arts
- Warner College of Natural Resources
- Natural Sciences
- Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences

Schools & Programs:

- Graduate School
- International Programs
- Online Degrees and Courses
- School of Advanced Materials Discovery
- School of Music, Theatre and Dance
- School of Biomedical Engineering
- School of Education
- School of Global Environmental Sustainability
- School of Social Work
- School of Public Health

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