

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Wesleyan University and the Wesleyan community are committed to the principles of liberty and equality. The University recognizes that the members of this community must be able to express themselves freely and at the same time expect tolerance and respect from one another; both are essential to our mission. Indeed, meaningful exchanges cannot occur in the absence of respect and tolerance. Intellectual vigor is best sustained when the free exchange of ideas is carried on within an environment supportive of human dignity and self-esteem. With freedom should come the wisdom and the responsibility to think before one speaks.

For these reasons, the University condemns all forms of discriminatory interference with the exercise of the rights of an individual or of any group to which that individual belongs. Such abridgement of rights is particularly abhorrent when carried out by those who have power over the individual they are affecting—whether that power comes from an administrative, academic, or any other position on campus. On the other hand, the University does not believe the free expression of ideas can always take place without pain or discomfort either to those who speak, listen, read, or write. The intellectual process, by its very nature, can be distressing, but Wesleyan does not necessarily regard actions that are distressing as violations of its codes of conduct.

In accordance, then, with the ideals of academic freedom, every member of the Wesleyan community should feel that he or she can enter into controversy without fear of being silenced or constrained. This community's commitment to the free exchange of ideas and pursuit of knowledge requires a wide range of protections for speech and expression, even when noxious or offensive. Belonging to this community, however, carries with it the responsibility of extending respect and openness of mind to others.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE UNIVERSITY TO ITS MEMBERS

It is the responsibility of every member of the University to respect the rights and privileges of all others in the University as enumerated below.

1. Freedom of assembly, speech, belief, and the right of petition, including the right of petition to the appropriate university authority, in the event of an academic evaluation or classroom situation considered by the petitioner to be prejudiced or untenable.
2. Protection from discrimination and abuse:
 - a. Wesleyan University is fully committed to a policy of equal opportunity and non-discrimination. The University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, veteran status, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.
 - b. Also prohibited is any form of discriminatory harassment performed by a member or members of the University against any other individual or groups. Discriminatory harassment may include any action or statement intended to insult, stigmatize, or degrade an individual or group on the basis of the categories of discrimination listed in 2a.
 - c. Sexual misconduct, including, but not limited to, sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, stalking and retaliation, is prohibited. (See [University Policies—Discriminatory Harassment and Sexual Misconduct](#), page 21).
3. The right of privacy in university residence halls. The living quarters of members of the University are private, and without an invitation from the occupant may not be entered unless an emergency arises involving the health or safety of the occupant; or for the enforcement of health or safety regulations; or in the event of a suspected violation of a university regulation, upon receiving permission from the vice president for student affairs; or, if for any other reason, upon 24 hours notice to the occupant. Where two or more individuals occupy the same living quarters, permission to enter from one occupant does not permit the entering person to assume that he/she has entered the quarters of anyone except the person who extended the invitation. This provision does not restrict entrance by custodial personnel and personnel retained by the University to provide services at scheduled intervals.
4. The right to expect that communication between a student and a member of the university staff or faculty with whom the student has had a counseling relationship is confidential and without the consent of the student may be disclosed by the counselor only when the health or safety of an individual is jeopardized or when compelled by legal process. In an instance involving the health or safety of an individual, disclosure will be made only to individuals in a position to assist the counselor or to alleviate the danger. In no case shall the content of such communication constitute a basis for disciplinary action or be introduced as evidence before the university judiciary.
5. The right to enter into physician-patient or similar relationships with medical and other professional personnel of the University with the understanding and assurance that confidence will be maintained in accordance with the ethical standards of the professions.
6. The right to confidentiality of disciplinary records, which may be released to other than appropriate university personnel only upon permission of the student.

7. The right to abstain from performing acts and the right to be protected against actions that may be harmful to the health or emotional stability of the individual or that degrade the individual or infringe upon his/her personal dignity.

NOTE: This language is directed at all forms of personal harassment including the use or threat of physical violence and physical or nonphysical coercion.

8. The right to be protected by standards of justice and fairness in any proceedings with the University.

Note: Fair and reasonable treatment should govern the access to and administration of all university facilities and programs.

To address complaints that have not been able to be resolved at or by the University, individuals may consider contacting:

New England Association of Schools and Colleges

3 Burlington Woods Drive, Suite 100

Burlington, MA 01803

(781) 425-7714

Office of Higher Education

61 Woodland Street

Hartford, CT 06105

(800) 842-0229

ctohe.org

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES FOR REGULATING CONDUCT

The following statement by the president of Wesleyan University and the Joint Statement on the Rights and Freedoms of Students outline the standards, structures, and procedures for holding members of Wesleyan University accountable in matters of community standards and conduct.

A STRUCTURE FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

THE RATIONALE

In order to understand what the university community can reasonably expect from the system for handling complaints filed under the Honor Code, the Code of Non-Academic Conduct or the Joint Statement on the Rights and Freedoms of Students, it is important to have in mind some underlying assumptions about the nature of the University itself.

A university is an elaborate and in some ways fragile institution that exists to provide a free and favorable environment for teaching and learning. The university community, therefore, has a need to be able to hold its members accountable for actions that damage the environment, infringe upon the rights of other individuals, or otherwise hinder the community in achieving its purpose.

It is essential to a sense of fairness that this principle of accountability be applied to each of the diverse constituencies of the institution: students, faculty, administrators, and staff. Although the ideal of promoting maximum individual freedom implies that these codes or restrictions should be no more elaborate or extensive than absolutely necessary for the University to protect its fundamental interests, it follows that each member of the University not only has rights, but also certain responsibilities for which he/she may be held accountable.

The rights and responsibilities of individuals in one group differ from those in another because of the differing ways in which various constituencies relate to the institution. The duties of salaried workers, for example, are generally quite specifically defined, and the terms of their employment are conditioned in part by state and federal legislation. Employees' "rights" are essentially those set forth in Wesleyan employment policy, and these employees are accountable to the head of the department in which they work.

An administrator, on the other hand, generally has a broader and less specific set of responsibilities and a different set of rights. He/she is expected to meet whatever professional standards may apply and also to observe the policies of the institution. Administrators work without contracts and are accountable through their supervisors to the president.

Faculty members at Wesleyan compose still another category. They hold contracts—in fact, after achieving tenure, lifetime contracts—and are accountable to the University and their peers for upholding a special set of professional responsibilities. One characteristic of these responsibilities is that there is no clear distinction between responsibilities in the classroom and outside of it—teachers are accountable for their professional comportment in toto. If they become subject to disciplinary proceedings, they may request highly formalized hearing procedures. Even in the absence of formal dismissal proceedings, a serious question about the ethical conduct of a teacher may cast a shadow over his/her career.