



December 4, 2024

Co-Chair Dr. Catherine Koshland
Co-Chair Dr. Shu-Wen Wang
Haverford College
370 Lancaster Ave
Haverford, PA, 19041

Sent via Electronic Mail (ckoshland@berkeley.edu; swang1@haverford.edu)

Dear Dr. Koshland and Dr. Shu-Wen Wang:

I write to you today on behalf of FIRE, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to defending free speech rights for all Americans, including on college campuses.¹

Given your roles as co-chairs of Haverford College’s “Ad Hoc Committee on Freedom of Expression, Learning, and Community,” I wanted to let you know that FIRE would be glad to advise the committee as it considers policies related to freedom of expression on campus. We have a plethora of resources available to assist you in protecting student and faculty expression, all free of charge in accordance with FIRE’s charitable mission.

First, FIRE can help Haverford’s Ad Hoc Committee assess Haverford’s overall climate for free speech. FIRE conducts the largest survey of its kind to track the climate for free expression on individual campuses nationwide and then uses these findings, alongside other research, to rank schools from best to worst in our annual College Free Speech Rankings.² Haverford ranked 190 out of 251 institutions in our most recent rankings.³

Second, FIRE can assist Haverford in revising its current policies governing student expression. FIRE catalogs the speech-related policies at almost 500 colleges and universities — including at Haverford, which earns our worst, “red light” rating for maintaining one policy that clearly and substantially restricts speech protected by the First Amendment, and maintaining two policies that, by virtue of vague wording, could too easily be applied to restrict protected expression.⁴

¹ For over 25 years, FIRE has defended freedom of expression, conscience, and other individual rights on America’s college and university campuses. You can learn more about our mission and activities at thefire.org.

² *2025 College Free Speech Rankings*, FIRE, rankings.thefire.org/rank (last visited November 21, 2024).

³ Please find more information about Haverford’s ranking at <https://rankings.thefire.org/rank/school/haverford-college>.

⁴ *Haverford College*, FIRE, <https://www.thefire.org/colleges/haverford-college> (last visited November 21, 2024).

Third, FIRE can assist Haverford in re-committing to freedom of expression by adopting an institutional free speech statement. We suggest modeling this policy on the “Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression” at the University of Chicago, better known as the “Chicago Statement.”⁵ At the University of Chicago and at the more than 100 institutions that have adopted their own version of the Chicago Statement, this policy has led to significant improvements in the campus climate for free speech.⁶

Fourth, FIRE can work with Haverford to adopt a commitment to institutional neutrality modeled after the principles expressed in the University of Chicago’s Report on the University’s Role in Political and Social Action (the “Kalven Report”).⁷ FIRE sees much utility in adopting institutional neutrality: It empowers students and faculty to speak about contested issues and provides a clear set of principles for institutions to follow when they’re asked to comment on current events.

FIRE’s Policy Reform team has worked closely with college and university leaders for years to improve the climate for freedom of expression on campuses nationwide. We would be glad to put together a memo detailing best practices from other institutions for the committee to consider in their deliberations. Or, if you would like FIRE to present at your next committee meeting, just let us know. You can reach FIRE Director of Policy Reform Laura Beltz at 215-717-3473 or at laura@thefire.org.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



William Harris ‘24
Program Associate, Engagement and Mobilization

Cc: Naomi Koltun-Fromm, Professor of Religion
Steven Lindell, Professor of Computer Science
Giri Parameswaran, Professor of Economics
Jess Lord, Vice President of Admission and Financial Aid; Corporation member
Sayeeda Rashid, Assistant Vice President for Institutional Equity and Access
Theresa Tensuan ‘89, Dean of Student Life
Paul Turner, Libraries
Bukky Olugbeko ‘25, past Student Affinity Coalition co-head
Yehyun Song ‘25, Students’ Council co-president

⁵ *The Chicago Statement*, FIRE, thefire.org/research-learn/chicago-statement (last visited November 21, 2024).

⁶ The full list of institutions that have endorsed a statement on free speech in the model of the “Chicago Statement” is available at thefire.org/chicago-statement-university-and-faculty-body-support.

⁷ *Adopting Institutional Neutrality*, FIRE, <https://www.thefire.org/defending-your-rights/reforming-college-policies/adopting-institutional-neutrality> (last visited November 21, 2024).

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