

Freedom of Expression at Conn

The right of individuals and groups to express themselves freely is fundamental to democracy. It is also central to a Connecticut College education. Freedom of expression is written into our mission (<http://www.conncoll.edu/at-a-glance/mission--values/>) of educating students to “put the liberal arts into action as citizens of a global society.” Active citizenship requires intellectual and personal engagement across social, political, ideological, and religious differences. It requires a community in which people who hold different perspectives and beliefs grapple with the difficult work of listening, reflecting, gathering evidence, making arguments, and engaging in constructive, informed, and rigorous debate for the purpose of greater knowledge and understanding. Connecticut College is committed to nurturing this kind of community.

Freedom of expression is also written into the Constitution of the United States. The First Amendment protects this right for every citizen. But just as the First Amendment may place certain time, place, and manner restrictions on speech, members of the Connecticut College community understand that the right to express oneself freely implies certain responsibilities. Free speech, in other words, is not free of consequences. The responsibilities we share in exercising this right arise from the values enshrined in our mission and expressed through our Honor Code (<http://www.conncoll.edu/honor-code/>), our embrace of academic freedom, and more broadly our shared Principles of Community (<http://www.conncoll.edu/equity-inclusion/freedom-of-expression/principles-of-community/>).

The Honor Code asks students to be accountable for their actions and conduct themselves with integrity, civility, and the utmost respect for the dignity of all human beings. Academic freedom recognizes the centrality of free inquiry to our educational mission, along with the right of scholars to study and teach as they see fit. Our Principles of Community seek to ensure our shared commitment to full participation: the conviction that all individuals, no matter what role they occupy within the College, should be able to contribute their talents fully in pursuit of their advancement and the advancement of the College’s mission. This is our common obligation to the progress of knowledge and truth.

Finally, as part of that obligation, all members of the community must be willing to develop self-awareness in order to reflect on their own power and authority and to consider the impact that their ideas, words, and actions may have on others. Free expression and full participation are thus two sides of the same commitment: competing and complementary dimensions of our collective search for freedom, truth, and justice. The necessary tension they embody may well be the most truthful expression of our academic enterprise and of the liberty that enterprise seeks to protect.



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