

Office of Student Affairs
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Student Handbook (../index.html)

MENU

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.