



Promoting Dialogue, Debate, and Free Speech on the College Campus

A Call to Action for Trustees

Trustees have a responsibility to foster a campus environment that advances the institution's mission to educate students. A culture that promotes free expression, freedom of inquiry, and intellectual openness is vital to a liberal arts education.

ACTION STEPS

- **Adopt an Official Policy.** Consider creating new, official policies on academic freedom or adopting existing guidance (e.g., the Chicago Principles on Freedom of Expression).
- **Foster Intellectual Diversity.** Encourage the president to promote viewpoint diversity and reasoned debate. Provide resources to student and faculty leaders interested in bringing guest lecturers from across the ideological spectrum to campus.
- **Model Intellectual Openness.** College leaders should attend public events on a range of topics and perspectives in order to model intellectual humility and intellectual openness.
- **Host Formal Debates.** Promote discussion and learning by partnering with organizations that facilitate civil debates. The endorsement of an event by the governing board can signal to the community the importance of respectful discourse.
- **Prevent Disinvitations.** Develop clear, viewpoint-neutral policies and procedures governing the invitation and accommodation of campus speakers. Avoid the negative and even legal repercussions that may come from disinviting a speaker.



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- **Review Official Handbooks.** Conduct an official review of academic freedom policies in both the faculty and student handbooks. Ensure that existing policies can address current issues, such as the use and abuse of social media.
- **Educate Administrative Staff.** Reinforce norms of free expression and open debate in training programs for staff and administrators.
- **Instill the Importance of Free Speech from Day One.** Include discussions of academic freedom and free speech in student and faculty orientations.
- **Create Policies Concerning Class Session Recording.** Require detailed procedures in course syllabi about recording remote lectures and/or online discussions, consistent with university policies.
- **Instruct Faculty to Create a Learning Environment that is Tolerant of All Viewpoints.** Encourage faculty to refrain from discussing their personal viewpoints and to keep the classroom focused on course material.
- **Create Avenues for Feedback.** Establish open forums for students, faculty, and administrators to voice their concerns to the board. Set the standard for civil engagement by considering feedback thoughtfully.
- **Adopt or Renew a Zero Tolerance Policy.** Adopt or revise policies that recognize the value of viewpoint diversity, and identify explicit sanctions for violations of the free exchange of ideas.

*ACTA promotes academic freedom,
academic excellence, and accountability at
colleges and universities.*

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