

# **Alabama A&M University – Policy on Free Expression**

In compliance with the provisions of Act 2019-396 (the “Act”), the University hereby formally codifies its Policy on Free Expression, superseding and replacing all policies of the University which address the same subject matter. This policy is designed to protect and uphold free speech rights for students, faculty and staff of the University, and other persons and groups addressed by the Act.

As a public institution, Alabama A&M University recognizes that its primary function is the discovery, improvement, transmission, and dissemination of knowledge by means of research, teaching, discussion and debate. It is the intention of Alabama A&M University to ensure intellectual freedom and free expression. The mission of the university is dedicated to intellectual inquiry, the application of knowledge and excellence in teaching, research, and service, which is responsive to the needs of a diverse student population and the social and economic needs of the region. Consistent with our mission and in the spirit of academic inquiry, to dissent, to disagree with generally accepted truth and knowledge is acceptable. The university also stands for the right of all in the university community to pursue their legitimate activities without interference, intimidation, coercion, or disruption. The university will protect the rights of freedom of speech, expression, petition, and peaceful assembly and affirms all rights and freedoms guaranteed under the Constitution of the United States.

Reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions will be enforced in accordance with the provisions of applicable law. However, the enforcement will not depend, in any way, on any lawful subject matter involved in an expressive activity. All activities using university facilities should be reserved with the appropriate office in advance to ensure the desired facility is available and adequate arrangements are made for safety and security.

In addition to those facilities which an organization can reserve for amplified expressive activity or invited speakers, Alabama A&M University provides forums for the non-amplified expression of ideas and opinions, such as the following:

1. Traditional public forums include the university's public streets, sidewalks, parks, and similar common areas such as the grass and sidewalk around the Amphitheater at the center of the Quad. These areas are generally available for non-amplified expressive activity, planned or spontaneous, for the individual or small group at any time without the need for reservation or prior approval, unless the space is already scheduled; and
2. Designated public forums include other parts of the campus that may become temporarily available for non- amplified expressive activity as designated by the university. Examples of designated forums include parking lots and athletic fields. However,
3. Non-public forums are areas that are not traditional public forums or designated public forums. These locations will be restricted to use for their intended purpose and are typically not available for public expressive activity. Examples include, but are not limited to, classrooms, residence halls, faculty and staff offices, academic buildings, administration buildings, medical treatment facilities, libraries, research and computer labs, and private residential housing on campus.

4. Additionally, security considerations may affect the availability of spaces that would otherwise be available.

## PROCEDURES

1. Registered student organizations and university departments may display signs and banners at designated locations on campus. Student organizations must obtain prior approval from the Office of Student Activities and Leadership Development

2. Literature can be distributed in public forums. However, the party distributing the literature is responsible for cleaning up any discarded paper and restoring the campus to its previous condition. Literature may not be distributed in non-public forums.

3. No amplification equipment may be used.

4. Use of campus land is on a temporary basis.

5. Approved advertisement may be placed on open bulletin boards inside or outside university buildings.

6. No activity will be permitted that blocks access to university buildings, streets, sidewalks, or facilities, defaces property, injures individuals, unreasonably interferes with regular or authorized university activities or functions, or disrupts the free flow of pedestrian or vehicular traffic.

Disruptive activities will not be allowed. The university has defined a disruptive activity as any action by an individual, group, or organization to impede, interrupt, interfere with or disturb the holding of classes, the conduct of the university business, or the authorized scheduled events and activities of any and all segments of the university. Furthermore, any activity that incites imminent lawless action or that triggers an automatic violent response will be considered disruptive. In addition to any potential criminal penalties, students engaging in disruptive activities will be referred to the Office of Judicial Affairs, and employees will be referred to the Office of Human Resources.

The Vice President for Student Affairs is responsible for the review of this operating policy every four years or as needed.

This policy is promulgated with the express intent to fully comply with and will be interpreted and enforced consistent with the requirements of the Act. All mandatory provisions of the Act not expressly set forth herein are incorporated by this reference into this policy.