



KNOW YOUR FREE SPEECH RIGHTS

As a student of Davidson College, your rights to freedom of speech and expression are protected in a variety of documents. However, these rights are not absolute and may be subject to limitation in some circumstances.

In March of 2023, Davidson College approved the Commitment to Freedom of Expression statement that reaffirms the college's dedication to creating a learning environment open to all students. Since its approval, there have been few to no changes in campus policies or implementation of the existing policies.

The College Constitution lays the framework for legal protections for students as both members of the college and citizens. It additionally protects student organizations and allows them the right to publicly express opinions and ask questions. The Constitution does limit public expressions so as not to disrupt the essential operations of the college. These limits include time, place, and manner restrictions. Davidson College does not publish specific time, place, and manner restrictions but instead requires students to register events, displays, or protests with the Office of Student Activities. This leaves the application of restrictions to the discretion of the College on a case-by-case basis.

The Davidson Student Handbook outlines harassment policies. Any verbal or written word that interferes with a student's educational opportunity or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment can be considered harassment. The definition encompasses any unwelcome speech, written communications, or physical conduct on the basis of an individual's race, color, gender, national origin, religion, age, sexual orientation, or disability (or that of an individual's relatives, friends, or associates). It is the opinion of Davidsonians for Freedom of Thought and discourse that these policies, in their vagueness, open the path for speech suppression and First Amendment violations.

The Residence Life Handbook provides guidance on flyer placement, allowing them only in designated public spaces. It additionally limits the content of flyers to abide by the Davidson College statement of purpose and campus policies. Flyers placed in the Alvarez College Union must be approved by the Office of Student Activities.



STEPS TO TAKE WHEN FACING A FREE SPEECH VIOLATION

1 Know Your Rights

Familiarize yourself with the Student Handbook, Residence Life Handbook, and the College Constitution, especially sections related to harassment, solicitation, and flyer distribution.

2 Document Everything

Keep a written record of the incident: what happened, when, who was involved, and any communications or policies cited. Take photos and screenshots of any materials that were removed.

3 Contact On-campus Resources

Contact the Office of Student Activities or the Residence Life Office for clarification or to raise concerns. Reference relevant college policies when asking for explanations or appealing decisions.

4 Get Additional Support

Davidsonians for Freedom of Thought and Discourse is an alumni organization dedicated to supporting free speech at Davidson College. We are available to advocate for students, help students understand policies, and navigate conversations with administrators. DFTD is experienced in preparing public statements and is able to provide references to additional legal resources.