



NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
Student Involvement

NIU Statement on Freedom of Expression

Northern Illinois University is committed to freedom of expression, ensuring that all members of the university community have the broad latitude to speak, write, listen, challenge and learn. NIU values all individuals and their rights, and encourages meaningful dialogue and a respectful exchange of ideas and opinions so that the voices of every student, faculty, staff and visitor to our campus can be acknowledged.

When members of the university community or the public choose to express their thoughts and opinions – be that through words, peaceful actions or visuals – all should expect some form of opposing views. The role of university administration is not to weigh in on the varying perspectives, but rather to foster an environment in which differences can be explored, ideas challenged and society advanced. These points and counterpoints might be contrary to public opinion and NIU's values of civility, collegiality, diversity and inclusiveness, but our First Amendment protects virtually all speech, no matter how unorthodox, offensive or distasteful.

University Statement on Freedom of Speech and Social Media

NIU's Freedom of Expression Policy and Statement reflect the university's values, role and expectations for ensuring our university community has the broad latitude to speak, write, listen, challenge, and learn. Whether shared in person, on a poster or online, freedom of expression is everyone's right and warrants great responsibility. NIU encourages exercising that right in a civil and respectful way, and understanding that hateful speech designed primarily to inflict damage or harm upon members of our shared community goes against NIU's values and may cause a tear at the fabric of our community.

We ask all students, faculty and staff to thoughtfully consider and understand the following about social media:

- The use of University spaces, forums, and handles/hashtags to conduct personal speech and expression does not imply acceptance or endorsement by the University of the views expressed.
- NIU does not agree with or support speech intended to damage or harm others in any form, whether anonymous or identified, and can act as it deems appropriate to educate students or others violating this principle.
- Personal speech and expression of views may sometimes be offensive to others who receive it, whether intentional or not. It is important to remember that the law protects unpopular or controversial viewpoints, unless the speech/expression incites violence, defames another, or otherwise violates the law.
- NIU appreciates peaceful speech and expression of personal views, even on social media. Words, images and actions have the ability to instantly spread locally and even globally.
- Individuals can report incidents of bias at go.niu.edu/bias
- The university reserves the right to take appropriate action against any individual who engages in unlawful speech that is sufficiently serious (i.e., severe, persistent or pervasive) to deny or limit a student's ability to participate in or benefit from the University's educational programs, or is otherwise illegal, even if done on social media.

NIU's freedom of expression policy does not remove the responsibility for our students, faculty, staff and guests to behave in accordance with our community norms. We encourage all to make good choices and let civility, collegiality, diversity and inclusiveness serve as guideposts for meaningful social exchanges.

Freedom of Expression at NIU

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