



Summary of OSU's Speech and Expression Policies

Freedom of Expression

Oregon State University seeks to foster an inclusive environment where everyone is provided an equal opportunity to succeed, learn, explore, and engage in dialogue.

Freedom of expression is essential to the university's commitment to ensure inclusive educational opportunities.

At OSU, differences and dissenting viewpoints are not only tolerated but encouraged as part of the educational process. As a community, we recognize from time to time, freedom of expression is a right that may raise strong emotional responses when put into practice.

Our Principles

The following principles provide the foundation for expression at OSU.

- Freedom of speech (also called freedom of expression) is a fundamental right guaranteed by the U.S. and Oregon constitutions.
- While individuals have a right to make statements whether they are popular or unpopular, agreeable or offensive, OSU community members share a responsibility to treat each other respectfully, including when discussing or debating controversial topics.
- Freedom of speech does not extend to specific threats of violence against individuals and cannot be exercised in ways that significantly disrupt the operation of the university or the legal rights of others.
- Freedom of speech generally cannot be denied because an opinion or the language used to express an opinion is viewed as highly offensive.
- The university may reasonably regulate the [time, place, and manner of expression](#) (PDF) to ensure that it does not disrupt the university's activities.¹
- In addition to our position on Freedom of Expression, OSU commits to the following [purpose, priorities and philosophy of campus response to protest](#) (PDF).
- The university may exercise its own right to speak out against speech that runs counter to OSU's values or its commitment to promoting inclusive and equitable educational opportunities.

For more information, consult the [documents to support campus protest](#) (PDF).

OSU's Policies on Speech and Expression

Speech and Expression on OSU Property

- In general, quads, lawns, streets and sidewalks may be used for speech activities and OSU will not restrict those activities based on content or viewpoint. However, speech activities may not impede pedestrian and vehicular traffic, nor inhibit access to and egress from regular or authorized university activities.
- Speech activities may not be conducted at a volume that unreasonably disrupts the normal use of classrooms, offices, or laboratories.
 - When requesting the use of UHDS grounds, a sound permit may be required. Noise level is not to exceed 50 dB during academic terms at the base of the nearest building to the vicinity of the event venue or 110 dB on the weekends, 30 ft from the speakers/sound amplifying equipment. See [UHDS Sound Permit form](#).
- Unless designated below, buildings are open to the public and the OSU community for speech activities during regular business hours. Exceptions include:
 - Classroom buildings;
 - Research and laboratory facilities and buildings;
 - The Valley Library;
 - Plageman Hall (Student Health Center);
 - Individual administrative offices not serving members of the public;
 - OSU-Cascades Graduate and Research Center;
 - Residence Halls (see more below for Dining Centers, which have different speech rules than either the Residence Halls or other buildings not on this list); and,
 - Any area or building designated for authorized access only.
- University spaces are often multipurpose, and the university may regulate speech and expression based on the function a space is serving at a given time.
- See [University Standard 576-005 Time, Place, and Manner Rules for Speech Activities](#) for more.

Signs, Posters, Chalking, Banners, Bulletin Boards and More – Materials Affixed to OSU Buildings

- No signage, posters, fliers, banners, chalking, or other materials may be placed on the exterior surfaces of university buildings (or the interior surfaces of university buildings not designated for posting) by individuals other than OSU employees or departments acting in their official capacity. See [OSU Time, Place and Manner Policy 576-005-0033](#).
- Individual units may maintain their own message or bulletin boards reserved for speech activities. Unit heads are encouraged to be intentional in designating whether the boards are open to all speakers on all topics, or whether the boards are limited only to OSU-sponsored speech and/or speech only on certain topics. (In most cases, OSU is not permitted to regulate the content of viewpoints expressed on bulletin boards, but may regulate content where consistent with the purpose of the board.) Unit heads are also encouraged to label the bulletin boards accordingly, and to be consistent in monitoring and enforcing the limits of those boards.

Use of Signs, Posters, Chalking, Banners, Tables or Other Structures – Used in Outdoor Spaces Open for Speech Activities (Not Affixed to OSU Buildings)

- There are limits on the sizes of tables, carts, booths and similar structures that can be used in outdoor spaces by non-OSU sponsored individuals or groups and reservations may be required. For more details, see [OSU Time, Place and Manner Policy 576-005-0025](#).
- Chalking is permitted on sidewalks, but not on OSU buildings, unless by an OSU employee or department for official university business. See [OSU Time, Place and Manner Policy 576-005-0033](#).

Distribution of Pamphlets, Newspapers or Other Written Materials Inside OSU Buildings

- Unless otherwise designated, news bins and other means of distributing written materials inside OSU buildings are limited to OSU-sponsored uses. See [this statement](#) and the [OSU Time, Place and Manner Policy 576-005-033](#).

Distribution of Pamphlets, Newspapers or Other Written Materials in Outdoor Spaces

- Where non-disruptive under the time, place and manner policy, individuals or groups may distribute written materials to willing recipients in outdoor spaces.
- Companies or organizations wishing to place news bins on OSU property should make a request as provided in [this form](#) and follow the requirements in that policy.

Requested Notifications of Picketing or Demonstrations

- To support scheduling and public safety, individuals or groups planning to engage in picketing or a demonstration are requested (but not required) to provide notification to individuals designated in the [OSU Time, Place and Manner Policy 576-005-0025](#).

Invited Speakers, Guests and Groups

- Members and visitors of the university community may criticize and contest the views expressed by speakers or groups who are invited to the university. However, individuals or groups may not significantly disrupt, shut down, or interfere with the freedom of invited guests to speak, assemble, or protest.

Residence Halls and Dining Centers

- Residence halls and dining facilities are subject to rules set by University Housing and Dining Services (UHDS). Residents of OSU's residence halls may decorate their rooms in accordance with the [Student Policy and Information Guide](#). Residents are free to express themselves, but should consult with Residence Education/UHDS staff regarding questions about whether certain publicly-viewable posters, decorations or room displays are recommended for community spaces and align with other OSU policies and standards.
- Advertising and promotion in the dining centers is governed by UHDS policies found [here](#).
- In mixed-use buildings, such as the OSU-Cascades Dining Center or the Corvallis campus International Living and Learning Center, classrooms are not open for public speech activities and dining centers are governed by University Housing and Dining Services. Solicitation is not permitted in the residence portion of Residence Halls (see the [The UHDS Student Policy and Information Guide](#)).

Academic Freedom and Political Activities by Employees

- Academic freedom is essential to the university and its mission. Faculty and the OSU administration accept the responsibility for maintaining an atmosphere in which scholars may freely teach, conduct research, publish, and engage in other scholarly activities. This responsibility includes maintaining the freedom for the examination of controversial issues, including during classroom discussion when such issues are germane to the subject matter of the course. See more about [academic freedom and faculty appointments](#) and [academic freedom in research](#).
- OSU values free speech and participation in the political process. As private individuals, OSU employees are encouraged and free to engage in political activities on their own time and using their own resources, in ways that do not interfere with their university

employment duties; do not convey that such activities are taking place within their role as a university employee; and do not imply that OSU endorses individual political content posted on their personal social media accounts or in other venues.

- State and federal laws prohibit OSU employees from using OSU resources to support or oppose candidates, ballot measures or initiative petitions being circulated for placement on a ballot.
 - For employees who work in positions or work spaces that are public-facing or student-facing, employees should not post signs, posters, buttons or other materials or wear shirts or other clothing in their workspaces that communicate support or opposition to candidates, ballot measures or initiative petitions. This is to avoid the appearance of OSU support/opposition.
 - Employees are free to display buttons or other material supporting or opposing candidates, ballot measures or initiative petitions on personal belongings that are carried to or from their workspaces, so long as those belongings are not displayed in workspaces that the public or students frequent.
 - Employees are free to display stickers or other materials supporting or opposing candidates, ballot measures or initiative petitions on their personal vehicles parked in OSU lots.
- No employee may commit OSU to a political advocacy position without authorization from the Office of Government Relations in coordination with the President.