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Demonstrations and Disruption

In pursuit of its mission to promote teaching and learning, Washington University in St. Louis encourages students, faculty and staff to be bold, independent and creative thinkers.

Fundamental to this process is the creation of an environment that respects the rights of all members of the university community to explore and to discuss questions which interest them, to express opinions and debate issues energetically and publicly, and to demonstrate their concern by orderly means.

Therefore, it is the policy of the university to protect the rights of free speech, assembly and expression by making its facilities available for activities related to the exercise of these rights, including peaceful assembly.

In carrying out this policy the university must also meet its obligations to the university community to maintain a safe and secure atmosphere conducive to academic and educational pursuits; to preserve the dignity and seriousness of university ceremonies; to provide an orderly forum for speakers and events; and to safeguard the right of all faculty, students and staff to carry out their academic and professional activity without coercion, harassment or disruption.

As is true with the society at large, the rights to free speech, assembly and expression in the university community are subject to reasonable restrictions regarding time, place and manner, applied without discrimination toward the content of the viewpoints being expressed. These rights do not include the right to engage in unlawful activity, activity that endangers or imminently threatens to endanger any member of the university community or any of the university's physical facilities, or any activity that disrupts or obstructs the functions of the university or imminently threatens such disruption or obstruction.

As a guideline, examples of disruptive and, therefore, prohibited actions include but are not limited to: preventing an instructor or speaker from giving a lecture, by means of shouts, interruptions, chants or other verbal or audible means; interfering with the audience's view of an instructor or speaker; preventing members of the university community from participating in class, hearing a lecture or taking an examination; disrupting business operations of the university; disrupting use of or access to libraries or residential housing; refusing to leave a building or space that has been declared closed or upon request of a proper authority; obstructing passage within, into, or out of buildings; interfering with prospective student or employer recruitment or university activities for alumni, parents or other invited guests; refusing to leave a closed meeting when unauthorized to attend; and preventing free pedestrian or vehicular movement onto or about campus.

When possible, individuals or groups that engage in disruptive activity in violation of this policy will be warned by a university administrator, and instructed to cease and desist, before disciplinary actions are invoked or other action is taken. If the individual or group persists in engaging in disruptive conduct in violation of this policy, those persons will be subject to disciplinary action, including fines, probation, suspension, expulsion, termination of employment, and/or arrest for violations of the law. Prompt compliance with instructions may be a mitigating factor in any disciplinary proceeding. Members of the university community are responsible for ensuring their guests are aware of this policy and may also be held accountable for the actions of their guests in the event of a violation.

Members of the university community must follow existing university policies regarding reservation of space. Scheduling events through Event Management or the appropriate department or school facilitates organized event planning and furthers equitable availability of space. Locations generally approved for peaceful assembly, rallies, demonstrations, and activities of this nature include the

Brookings Quadrangle, Mudd Field and Edison Courtyard, when not otherwise reserved or in use. Such activities are not permitted in or near University on-campus residential areas, including the South 40 and the Northside. The use of university space shall not imply acceptance or endorsement by the university of the views expressed.

Nothing about this policy should be understood to create rights for anyone who is not a current university student, faculty or staff member. The university is a private institution and may limit access to university property and facilities as it deems necessary.

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