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FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION & INSTITUTIONAL NEUTRALITY

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Freedom of Expression

Franklin College is committed to free and open inquiry in all matters, and it guarantees all members of the campus community the broadest possible latitude to speak, write, listen, challenge, and learn. Except insofar as limitations on that freedom are necessary to the effective functioning of the institution, Franklin College fully respects and supports those freedoms.

The ideas of different members of this community will often and quite naturally conflict. But it is not the proper role of the institution to attempt to shield individuals from ideas and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable, or even offensive. Although the values of Franklin College include civility, and although all members of the campus community share in the responsibility for maintaining a climate of mutual respect, concerns about civility and mutual respect should not be used as a justification for closing off discussion of ideas, however offensive or disagreeable those ideas may be to some members of our community.

The freedom to debate and discuss the merits of competing ideas does not mean that individuals may say whatever they wish, wherever they wish. Franklin College may restrict expression that violates the law, that falsely defames a specific individual, that constitutes a genuine threat or harassment, that unjustifiably invades substantial privacy or confidentiality interests, or that is otherwise directly incompatible with the functioning of the institution. In addition, Franklin College may reasonably regulate the time, place, and manner of expression to ensure that it does not disrupt the ordinary activities of the institution. But these are narrow exceptions to the general principle of freedom of expression, and it is important that these exceptions not be used in a manner that is inconsistent with the institution's commitment to the free and open discussion of ideas.

Franklin College's fundamental commitment is to the principle that debate or deliberation may not be suppressed because the ideas put forth are thought by some or even by most members of the campus community to be offensive, unwise, or wrong-headed. It is for the individual members of the community, not for Franklin College as an institution, to make those judgments for themselves, and to act on those judgments

not by seeking to suppress speech, but by openly and vigorously contesting the ideas they oppose. Indeed, fostering the ability of members of the community to engage in such debate and deliberation in an effective and responsible manner is an essential part of the College's educational mission.

As a corollary to this commitment to protect and promote free expression, members of the Franklin College community must also act in conformity with the principle of free expression. Although members of the community are free to criticize and contest the views expressed on campus, and to criticize and debate speakers who are invited to express their views on campus, they may not obstruct or otherwise interfere with the freedom of others to express views they reject or even loathe. To this end, Franklin College has a responsibility not only to promote freedom of debate and deliberation, but also to protect that freedom when others attempt to restrict it.

Institutional Neutrality

At Franklin College, we seek a campus community in which the free expression of thoughts and ideas inspires lively and respectful debate. Therein lies the opportunity for learning from one another and growing as citizens of this and the broader community. Our role is to provide the culture and opportunities for diverse viewpoints to flourish, rather than to espouse institutional stances on cultural, political or social matters that do not directly affect the College's mission or function. This open exchange of views reflects the heart of the liberal arts experience, even as it often elicits vehement difference of opinion. The community of teaching and learning requires that no single viewpoint be institutionally endorsed, lest others be diminished or suppressed as a result. Respect for the thoughts, ideas, opinions and perspectives of all within a vibrant liberal arts community requires that none of their expression and debate be impeded by an institutional position that purports to represent the consensus viewpoint of its large and diverse constituency.

Adopted by the Franklin College Board of Trustees

October 9, 2026