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State University System Free Expression Statement

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2. State University System Free Expression Statement

The State University System of Florida and its twelve public postsecondary institutions adopt this Statement on Free Expression to support and encourage full and open discourse and the robust exchange of ideas and perspectives on our respective campuses. The principles of freedom of speech and freedom of expression in the United States and Florida Constitutions, in addition to being legal rights, are an integral part of our three-part university mission to deliver a high quality academic experience for our students, engage in meaningful and productive research, and provide valuable public service for the benefit of our local communities and the state. The purpose of this Statement is to affirm our dedication to these principles and to seek our campus communities' commitment to maintaining our campuses as places where the open exchange of knowledge and ideas furthers our mission.

A fundamental purpose of an institution of higher education is to provide a learning environment where divergent ideas, opinions and philosophies, new and old, can be rigorously debated and critically evaluated. Through this process, often referred to as the marketplace of ideas, individuals are free to express any ideas and opinions they wish, even if others may disagree with them or find those ideas and opinions to be offensive or otherwise antithetical to their own world view. The very process of debating divergent ideas and challenging others' opinions develops the intellectual skills necessary to respectfully argue through civil discourse. Development of such skills leads to personal and scholarly growth and is an essential component of the academic and research missions of each of our institutions.

It is equally important not to stifle the dissemination of any ideas, even if other members of our community may find those ideas abhorrent. Individuals wishing to express ideas with which others may disagree must be free to do so, without fear of being bullied, threatened or silenced. This does not mean that such ideas should go unchallenged, as that is part of the learning process. And though we believe all members of our campus communities have a role to play in promoting civility and mutual respect in that type of discourse, we must not let concerns over civility or respect be used as a reason to silence expression. We should empower and enable one another to speak and listen, rather than interfere with or silence the open expression of ideas.

Each member of our campus communities must also recognize that institutions may restrict expression that is unlawful, such as true threats or defamation. Because universities and colleges are first and foremost places where people go to engage in scholarly endeavors, it is necessary to the efficient and effective operations of each institution for there to be reasonable limitations on the time, place, and manner in which these rights are exercised. Each institution has adopted regulations that align with Florida's Campus Free Expression Act, section 1004.097, Florida Statutes, and with the United States and Florida Constitutions and the legal opinions interpreting those provisions. These limitations are narrowly drawn and content-neutral and serve to ensure that all members of our campus communities have an equal ability to express their ideas and opinions, while preserving campus order and security.



Did U Know?

Florida's Public Universities Have the Lowest Cost of Earning a Degree in the Nation
Expand for More Information ⁺

Florida's Public Universities Have the Lowest Cost of Earning a Degree in the Nation

Did U Know? The College Board's "Annual Trends in College Pricing" report confirmed that the cost of a bachelor's degree at Florida's public universities has been the lowest in the country for three consecutive years.

U.S. News & World Report also ranked Florida as No. 1 for tuition and fees and the No. 1 state for higher education overall since its inception in 2017.

What does this mean for you? With a continued emphasis on affordability, the average State University System student pays \$270 for a bachelor's degree after factoring in Florida's investment in financial aid, marking the sixth consecutive year of decline. Within the SUS, over 17,000 fewer resident undergraduate students took out loans in 2020-21 compared to 2019-20, while 77% of resident undergraduate students did not take out any loans. Increased financial aid, increased graduation rates, and consistently low tuition have resulted in fewer resident undergraduates taking out loans and lower loan default rates.

Bottom line? The State University System is a good return on investment.



[State University System of Florida](#)

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