

Campus Free Speech

Continue the Uninhibited Diversity of Thought, Speech, and Expression

Fundamental to the mission of all public universities is a commitment to open discussion and the free exchange of ideas. Each year, thousands of guest speaking engagements and demonstrations collectively take place at Michigan’s public universities; almost all of which are without incident. This commitment to free speech and free expression is complemented by an obligation to enable access to safe, secure, and sustainable venues for speech, teaching, learning, research, employment, housing, and service at the state university campuses. All of these institutions—in policy and in practice—allow for, and protect, the rights of free speech without regard to viewpoint.

Michigan’s public universities—like all public bodies in Michigan—use the reasonable “time, place, and manner” discretion afforded by the both the United States and Michigan Constitutions to maintain reasonable order on their properties, and in their services, events, and programs, while simultaneously fostering robust dialogue and promoting civic engagement. Much like there are parameters regarding speech and expression at the United States and Michigan Capitol buildings, similar considerations of time, place, and manner are utilized on college campuses to protect the interests of those seeking the opportunity to learn.

Michigan’s Constitution confers upon the state university governing boards the exclusive power to supervise and control their institutions. This governance model has produced a setting on college campuses that works well in allowing for the free expression of speech while at the same time providing appropriate access to a high-quality, safe, and secure learning environment.

Policy Actions:

- As enshrined in the Michigan Constitution, ensure university governing board oversight of campus free speech policies in protecting First Amendment rights.
- Oppose state legislation that seeks to place mandates on institutional campus free speech policies.