

11-22
RESOLUTION

to
Affirm Free Speech and Academic Freedom

Whereas, the Board of Trustees of Francis Marion University is committed to academic freedom and freedom of expression in support of the University's purpose to foster the open exchange of knowledge and ideas through civil discourse and scholarly endeavors; and

Whereas, the University substantially embraces the University of Chicago's Statement on Freedom of Expression, consistent with the provisions contained below and the academic freedom protections provided the campus community through the Francis Marion University Faculty Handbook; and

Whereas, the ideas of different members of a campus community will often and quite naturally conflict. However, the purpose of an institution is not to shield or attempt to shield individuals from ideas and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable, or even deeply offensive. While all members of the campus community share in the responsibility for maintaining a climate of mutual respect, concerns about civility should not be used to justify denying the otherwise lawful discussion of ideas, however disagreeable or offensive those ideas may be to some; and

Whereas, the freedom to debate and discuss the merits of competing ideas does not allow uninhibited expression in every University space. The University may reasonably regulate the time, place, and manner of expression to ensure that it does not disrupt planned instruction and the ordinary activities of the University. Furthermore, the University may restrict expression that violates the law, falsely defames a specific individual, constitutes a genuine threat or harassment, unjustifiably invades substantial privacy or confidentiality interests, or that is otherwise incompatible with the safe and orderly functioning of the institution;

Whereas, the University must protect the educational experience of its students in ensuring health, safety, and order on its campus, in regulating competing uses of its facilities and grounds, and in protecting the safety and wellbeing of those with the right to use its facilities and grounds to engage in protected speech, among other significant interests; and

Whereas, the University'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 immoral. It is for the individual members of the campus community, not for the University, to make those judgments for themselves, and to act on those judgments not by seeking to suppress speech, but by openly discussing the ideas that they oppose in a civil manner; and

Whereas, while members of the campus community are free to criticize and intellectually challenge those with opposing views, they may not obstruct or otherwise significantly interfere with the freedom of others to express views they reject or even loathe.

Be it therefore resolved that the Board of Trustees of Francis Marion University hereby affirms, supports, and promotes academic freedom and the freedom of expression in the University community.

Be it further resolved that these principles apply to members of the campus community, including but not limited to, trustees, administrators, faculty, staff, students, invited guests, visitors, and members of the public who attend University activities and events.

APPROVED:

Secretary
Board of Trustees for Francis Marion University

Date:
