

Gustavus Statement on Freedom of Speech

Spring 2019

This statement was endorsed by the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee (November 2, 2018), the Faculty Senate (November 30, 2018), the full Gustavus faculty at their regular meeting (December 7, 2018), and by the Board of Trustees (February 15, 2019).

Free Speech and Community

Rooted in both the liberal arts and the Lutheran tradition, the Gustavus Adolphus College mission calls us to develop lifelong learners who lead fulfilling lives of leadership and service. As such, we commit ourselves to ensuring that our community is comprised of people of diverse perspectives, backgrounds, statuses, and identities and to encouraging the attainment of the knowledge, skills, and habits essential to achieving a just and peaceful world.

Consistent with the College's commitment to foster the development of values as an integral part of intellectual growth and to promote the open exchange of ideas, we strongly endorse freedom of speech as the inherent right of individuals to express themselves. Further, while freedom of speech and expression are accorded constitutional protection in our civic life, the value of free expression must be given even more rigorous affirmation in an intellectual community that prizes liberal education, academic freedom, and critical thinking. We note as well that the exercise of such freedoms and rights entails the acceptance of responsibility for one's actions.

As a community of persons from diverse backgrounds and with varied perspectives, we know that the expression of nearly any idea may challenge and even offend some members of the community. When considering even the toughest issues, the College affirms its commitment to the dialogue, debate, and constructive disagreement that lie at the heart of our mission to seek truth and understanding and to foster learning and growth. Thus, we seek to advance a culture within which ideas are expressed—and challenged—thoughtfully, vigorously, and with respect for the fundamental dignity of all people.