

Speakers Policy

Purpose

In order to promote a culture of genuine academic freedom, to encourage the free exchange of ideas, and to deepen the understanding of the relationship between faith and reason it is necessary to invite speakers to the university who have knowledge, expertise and/or opinions important to the discourse about a particular subject. The purpose of this policy is to set forth the university's policies for extending an invitation to such a speaker.

Statement of Policy

Those at the university who are in a position to invite a speaker to the university are responsible to consider carefully the ability of any potential invitee to contribute in a positive and meaningful way to the university's mission and identity, to the pursuit of truth, and to the deepening of the understanding between faith and reason. Speakers who are able to present the different sides of particular subject in a balanced and thoughtful manner are highly valued. Whenever the Catholic Church has a teaching about a particular topic, the organizer(s) of the event are responsible to ensure it is authoritatively and respectfully presented and given appropriate consideration as part of the discourse.

Careful consideration must be given before inviting a speaker who holds a position contrary to teachings of the Catholic Church or the mission and goals of the university. Each of the following must be addressed satisfactorily:

1. The goal of the presentation must be clearly in keeping with the mission and goals of the university and it must contribute to the deepening of the understanding of the relationship between faith and reason.
2. It is never appropriate to give a speaker who is opposed to Catholic teaching an honor or to provide a platform that could be construed as an honor (e.g. as a Commencement speaker or as a speaker at some other significant event). When it is appropriate to invite speakers who oppose Catholic teaching to explain their views, it should be done at a time when it is clearly understood the platform is a part of the academic discourse of the university.
3. Catholic teaching on the topic under discussion must be presented as part of the program in a manner that is authoritative, respectful, and balanced (e.g. it would not be appropriate to give Catholic teaching 3 minutes and the opposing view 50 minutes).
4. It must be made clear that the views of the speaker(s) do not represent the views of the university or any university department or group.
5. The Office of Public Affairs must be informed in advance of the invitation.

When inviting performers to the university, care must be taken prior to issuing an invitation to ensure the performer will respect the Christian, Catholic, and Benedictine mission and identity of the university. Performers normally require a university representative to sign a contract. All contracts will be reviewed by legal counsel and must include (usually in the form of a rider to the contract) language specifically stating the performer will respect the university's values and mission. The contract should specifically prohibit obscenity, profanity, lewd language, and lyrics, and discourse contrary to the university's values. Entertainers who refuse the addition of such a clause or rider shall not be invited to perform at the university. The rider or contract must also state that failure to abide by terms will result in immediate cancellation of the performance to occur during the performance and action on the part of the university to recover damages in the form of advances or payments made because of breach of contract.

Approval of Speakers

➤ Faculty

Faculty wishing to invite a speaker to a class or a departmental program or event should follow departmental procedure. If the event or program will be open to students outside the department, the approval of the Dean of the School is required. If the event or program will be open to entire university community and/or the public, approval from the Dean's Council is required (with the exception of a Convocation where approval is given by the Convocation Committee and/or where the event is part of some other annual event such as The St. Hildegard Lecture, Prayer Day, etc. where there is already an approval process in place).

In the event the speaker to be invited is a person who will make a presentation that is in opposition to Catholic teaching or the goals of the university or when a speaker is invited to speak on a topic that is not in opposition to Catholic teaching but the speaker is known to advocate publicly and make presentations on other topic(s) in opposition to Catholic teaching, the Dean of the School, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, and the Office of Public Affairs shall be notified prior to the invitation being extended. This notification will enable the administrators notified to consult with Church authorities as necessary and to assist the faculty member in determining if the speaker should be invited and, if so, making sure the appropriate circumstances are in place to help prevent the speaker's presentation from being misunderstood or from becoming the source of scandal or unnecessary controversy.

➤ Staff

Members of the administrative staff who wish to invite a speaker to campus as part of an event or program should request approval from their supervisor, the head of their department, and the vice president who supervises their area.

In the event the speaker to be invited is a person who will make a presentation that is in opposition to Catholic teaching or the goals of the university or when a speaker is invited to speak on a topic that is not in opposition to Catholic teaching but the speaker is known to advocate publicly and make presentations on other topic(s) in opposition to Catholic teaching, the Office of Public Affairs shall also be notified prior to the invitation being extended. This notification will enable the Office of Public Affairs and the employee's vice president to consult with Church authorities as necessary and to assist in determining if the speaker should be invited and, if so, making sure the appropriate circumstances are in place to help prevent the speaker's presentation from being misunderstood or from becoming the source of scandal or unnecessary controversy.

➤ Student Organizations

Student organizations who wish to invite a speaker to speak to their group must obtain approval from the organization's official advisor. If there are any questions, the advisor may consult with the Dean of the School (in the case of an academic student organization), the Director of University Ministry (in the case of a religious student organization), or the Assistant Vice President for Student Development (in the case of a common interest student organization).

In the event the speaker to be invited is a person who will make a presentation that is in opposition to Catholic teaching or the goals of the university or when a speaker is invited to speak on a topic that is not in opposition to Catholic teaching but the speaker is known to advocate publicly and make presentations on other topic(s) in opposition to Catholic teaching, the Vice President for Student Development and the Office of Public Affairs shall also be notified prior to the invitation being extended. This notification will enable the Vice President for Student Development and the Office of Public Affairs to consult with Church authorities as necessary and to assist in determining if the speaker should be invited and, if so, making sure the appropriate circumstances are in place to help prevent the speaker's presentation from being misunderstood or from becoming the source of scandal or unnecessary controversy.

➤ Students

Students interested in inviting a speaker to campus must pursue their interest through one of the channels above. Individual students or informal student groups who do not exist as an official student organization are not eligible to invite speakers to the university. However, students may talk to a member of the faculty, a coach, the Convocation Committee, or a member of the staff with their suggestions of speakers they believe to be worthy of an invitation to speak at the university.

As part of the process of extending an invitation to a speaker, the department or group organizing the event is responsible to ensure the event is properly scheduled through the Department of Community Relations. Organizers are also responsible to ensure they have the budget necessary for all expenses incurred by the event. Organizers are responsible for hospitality for the speaker and for those invited to attend the event.

The university is under no obligation to provide a platform for speakers or entertainers who are hostile to the university's mission and goals or to the Catholic Church. Employees and students of the university should not expect the university to administer in a manner contrary to Catholic teaching or to the mission and goals of the university. The university reserves the right to refuse approval to extend an invitation to any speaker, and it reserves the right to rescind any invitation already extended to a speaker that it later determines would be contrary to the university's goals and mission.

Approved

President's Council (August 19, 2019)

Board of Trustees Executive Committee (August 22, 2019)