



POLICY & PROCEDURE DOCUMENT

NUMBER: 0.2400

SECTION: GENERAL UNIVERSITY

TITLE: Institutional Neutrality Policy

DATE: June 6, 2025

AUTHORIZED BY: Board of Regents and President's Cabinet

I. Purpose and Scope

Western Kentucky University (WKU) is committed to fostering an inclusive academic environment where freedom of expression, academic inquiry and the open exchange of diverse viewpoints are upheld. This policy affirms WKU's commitment to *viewpoint neutrality* in the administration of institutional resources and programs, while actively encouraging a robust diversity of perspectives across the campus community. It also codifies the University's position of institutional neutrality regarding matters that are not related to higher education or the University directly.

This policy applies to all University departments, programs, student organizations and administrative offices in their roles as hosts, sponsors or facilitators of speech, events and expressive activities.

For more information about freedom of speech and expression at WKU, visit <https://www.wku.edu/freespeech/>.

II. Policy

The University acknowledges and affirms the value of intellectual diversity within the University community. In furtherance of this institutional value, the University may not discriminate on the basis of an individual's political or social viewpoint or require an individual to endorse or condemn a specific ideology, political viewpoint, or social viewpoint to be eligible for hiring, contract renewal, tenure, promotion, admission, or graduation.

A. Access Neutrality

The University shall administer access to facilities, funding, platforms and other institutional resources in a manner that is viewpoint-neutral. No group or individual shall be denied access to such resources solely based on the content of their viewpoint, provided their conduct complies with University policies and applicable laws. Additionally, no group or individual will receive favored treatment based on the content of their viewpoint.

B. Affirming Diversity of Perspectives

The University values and encourages the representation of a wide range of intellectual, cultural, political and ideological perspectives. This includes supporting faculty, students and staff in engaging with complex or controversial issues in a climate of mutual respect and critical inquiry.

C. Support of Expressive Activities

The University supports the rights of individuals and groups to organize events, invite speakers, publish opinions and participate in public discourse. University policies regarding time, place and manner of expression shall be applied consistently, without regard to viewpoint.

D. Academic Freedom and Responsibility

Faculty and students are entitled to academic freedom in teaching, learning and research. This includes the right to challenge prevailing ideas.

E. Respectful Engagement

The University community is expected to engage in discourse in ways that promote understanding, even when disagreement exists. Disruptive conduct that prevents others from exercising their rights to free expression or inquiry will be addressed through appropriate channels.

F. Non-Endorsement

Hosting or permitting speech on campus does not imply the University's endorsement of any particular viewpoint. The role of the institution is to serve as a forum for learning and debate, not to enhance or suppress specific ideas.

G. Institutional Neutrality

WKU intentionally refrains from engaging in matters tangential to the University's core mission of educating students, knowledge creation and dissemination. Outlined in the Chicago Principles and the 1967 University of Chicago Kalven Report, institutional neutrality

allows universities to create an environment where the free exchange of ideas is not stifled by official institutional statements or comments from leadership. Guided by the concept of institutional neutrality, WKU does not take official positions on local, national or international issues unrelated to higher education or the university directly - clarifying that students, faculty and staff are instruments of dissent and critique.

H. Official Statements

1. The University President (or designee, when appropriate) approves and issues all official institutional statements.
2. The Chair of the Western Kentucky University Board of Regents has sole authority to approve and issue official statements on behalf of the Board of Regents.

III. Related Policies

See also:

[*0.2040 Discrimination and Harassment Policy*](#)

[*0.2310 Free Speech Policy*](#)

[*0.2300 Temporary Signage and Chalking*](#)

[*4.8001 Standards of Conduct*](#)