

Statement on Academic Freedom and Free Speech
from the Task Force on Freedom of Expression and Inquiry

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Virginia Tech unequivocally commits to upholding freedom of speech and academic freedom. Virginia Tech affirms the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, including the right to freedom of speech. The First Amendment requires the university to protect the expression of ideas and opinions, including those that people may find controversial, disagreeable, or offensive. Freedom of speech, like all rights in the Constitution, is not absolute. While most speech is protected by the First Amendment, it does not protect speech or actions that violate the law, such as incitement, defamation, threats, privacy violation, or intellectual property infringement, nor does it protect against unlawful harassment or discrimination. In addition, the First Amendment allows the university to regulate the time, place, and manner of expression. At Virginia Tech, freedom of speech should be exercised in a manner that ensures a learning environment that supports and promotes civil debate and mutual respect across differences.

Academic freedom, free expression, and open inquiry are core principles of higher education. Academic freedom enables scholars to conduct research, teach, speak, and publish within an area of expertise without interference or penalty. Academic freedom is essential to create and disseminate knowledge with the mission of improving the quality of life and the human condition within the Commonwealth of Virginia and throughout the world. Virginia Tech must ensure that all members of the university community can ask questions, listen to others, and learn through exposure to a range of ideas from a diverse community of scholars. Virginia Tech is committed to defending academic freedom and freedom of speech while providing a diverse and inclusive learning and work environment.