Passed by the Senate, 5/30/24

Statement on Freedom of Expression at Stanford

Stanford is profoundly committed to freedom of expression, free inquiry, and the open exchange of ideas. Freedom of expression is a fundamental value for the university's knowledge-bearing mission, alongside the inclusion of all viewpoints and the promotion of rigorous and reasoned academic debates. The freedom to explore and present new, unconventional, and even unpopular ideas is essential to the academic mission of the university; therefore, Stanford shall promote the widest possible freedom of expression, consistent with the university's legal and moral obligations to prevent harassment and discrimination. Accordingly, university policies must not censor individuals' speech based on the content of what is expressed, except in narrow circumstances.[1]

At the same time, Stanford's educational role as well as its academic and legal obligations differ across locations and contexts on campus, such as spaces open to all community members, classrooms, and dormitories. Community members also have varying privileges and responsibilities in different contexts. Likewise, legal rights and obligations pertain in different ways to community members depending on whether they are acting as students, teachers, staff, or faculty members. The principles of freedom of speech and expression will be understood in light of these variations across contexts and roles. The campus disruption policy furnishes an example of how some of these distinctions may be drawn.[2]

---

[1] These exceptions include speech that incites violence, meets the legal standard for harassment, constitutes a "true threat," or is obscene or defamatory.

[2] *Campus Disruptions*, Stanford Univ., https://perma.cc/97H5-86EY.