

Statement on Student Rights and Responsibilities

General Description

Policy Summary:

The statement recognizes the rights and responsibilities of students at Trinity University.

Scope:

Students are covered by this statement.

Exceptions:

None.

Policy Content

Summary

Academic institutions exist for the transmission of knowledge, the pursuit of truth, the development of students, and the general well-being of society. Free inquiry and free expression are indispensable to the attainment of these goals. As members of the academic community, students should be encouraged to develop the capacity for critical judgment and to engage in a sustained and independent search for truth.

Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The freedom to learn depends upon appropriate opportunities and conditions in the classroom, on the campus, and in the larger community. Students should exercise their freedom with responsibility.

The maintenance of the orderly processes of the University is an essential condition for freedom. Dissent and controversy should function within this framework. Violence, the threat of violence, and the disruptions of the normal functions of the University are alien to the spirit of the academic community.

The responsibility to secure and to respect general conditions conducive to the freedom to learn is shared by all members of the academic community. Trinity University recognizes its duty to develop policies and procedures which provide and safeguard this freedom. The purpose of this statement is to enumerate essential provisions for students' freedom to learn.

Expression

Personal Expression

Challenge and discomfort are essential in academic institutions, while proscription and coercion of thought have no place. Students shall be free to think independently and to discuss whatever subjects they wish. They shall be free to support causes, exchange views, and advance ideas, and at the same time they shall be expected to develop reasonable and responsible forms of self-expression.

In the classroom and in conference, instructors should encourage free discussion, inquiry, and expression. Student performance shall be evaluated solely on an academic basis, not on opinions or conduct outside of class in matters unrelated to academic standards. Students shall be free to take reasoned exception to the data or views offered in any course of study and reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled as well as acquiring and demonstrating the skills and competencies required.

Students shall enjoy the same freedom of speech, peaceful assembly, and the right to petition that all other citizens enjoy. Information about student views, beliefs, and political associations shall be considered confidential and shall not provide the basis for professional evaluation or recommendation.

Public Expression

Students have the right to hold demonstrations, distribute information, and express opinions as long as such expressions do not disrupt the regular operations of the University.

Organizations must follow approved procedures for sponsoring speakers, for scheduling events, and for reserving and using University facilities. Policies and regulations related to sponsoring speakers shall not restrict the content of the speaker's message.

As members of the University community, students bring a variety of interests to the campus and have the right of free association to join with other students with similar interests to form organizations according to the guidelines published by Student Life.

These organizations, while not legally a part of and not necessarily endorsed by Trinity University, are understood to be valuable components of the educational process. Students should be free, individually and collectively, to express their views and concerns on issues of institutional policy and on matters of general interest to the student body. In order to facilitate this, the presence of a recognized student representative organization is encouraged and expected.

Student-Edited Publications

To make decisions for their lives at the University, students must have access to accurate information and be able to engage in unfettered exchange of ideas. The student-edited press, accountable to the community through an equal-number student and faculty/staff Board of Campus Publications acting as publisher, provides information and a forum for discussion and exercises the student right to freely seek answers to questions.

Campus Climate

Act of Intolerance

Trinity University values a community where the dignity of self and others is not only maintained but actively pursued.

Civility

Trinity University strives to create an atmosphere in which basic civility and decency are expected and mutual respect and open communication are fostered.

Students living off campus are members of this community and, as such, are representatives of Trinity to the community at large. In this regard, students living off campus maintain an equal measure of accountability to the values and expectations of all members of this community as identified in the Student Handbook.

Safety

Trinity University is committed to creating and maintaining a safe campus environment within reasonable parameters. All members of the community have a right to live and learn free from violence (physical or emotional).

Maintenance of Orderly Processes

Procedures

Trinity University recognizes its responsibility to protect its institutional purpose by setting standards for scholarship, conduct, and use of its facilities. In fostering responsible student conduct, policies that govern disciplinary proceedings play a role along with example, counseling, and admonition. Proper procedural safeguards will be observed that are intended to ensure procedures that are fundamentally fair to all parties involved and to protect students from imposition of unfair penalties in all situations. Decisions are based on the greater weight of the credible evidence presented at the hearing. Procedural fairness requires that students at Trinity be informed of the nature of the allegations against them, be given a fair opportunity to refute such allegations, are afforded an opportunity to pose questions to accusers, and have provisions for review of decisions.

Trinity University has an obligation to clarify those standards of behavior that it considers essential to its educational mission and community life. These standards will represent a reasonable set of regulations that govern student conduct, while permitting the Trinity student to be as free as possible from limitations that have no direct relevance to the student's education.

Searches

Rooms or premises occupied by students and personal possessions of students will not be searched except in serious circumstances. Any exceptions must be authorized in writing by the Dean of Students or a designee and must specify the reason for the search and the objects and information sought. The student should be present, if possible, during a search. (The dean of students' office will publish detailed rights and procedures relative to room searches.)

Continuity of Education

Pending final action on a complaint, the status of the student will not be altered nor will his/her right to be present on the campus and to attend classes be suspended except for reasons relating to his/her physical or emotional safety and well-being; for reasons relating to the safety of the members of the University community; or when the continuing presence of the student poses a danger to persons or property, or poses an ongoing threat of disrupting the academic process or any activity authorized by the University. In such cases, the Dean of Students or a designee has the authority to take interim action pending the final action.

Procedures for Adoption and Amendment to this Statement

The statement on Student Rights and Responsibilities was approved by the Trinity University faculty (by majority vote), the student representative organization (by majority vote), and the administration. The Board of Trustees was advised of the adoption of the statement.

Amendments or changes to the statement on Student Rights and Responsibilities should be presented in writing, and submitted for a vote and approval as listed above, to the faculty, student representative organization, and the administration.

Revision Management

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Vice President Approval:

Enter Vice President(s) that are responsible for approving this document

Name:	Title:
Sheryl Tynes	Vice President for Student Life