Statement on Student Rights and Responsibilities

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General Description

Policy Summary:

The Statement on Student Rights and Responsibilities affirms Trinity University's commitment to fostering a learning environment built on mutual respect, intellectual exploration, and individual accountability. It provides a framework for students to understand both the protections they enjoy as members of the University community and the obligations they assume in contributing to the institution's educational mission.

Purpose:

The Statement on Student Rights and Responsibilities affirms Trinity University's commitment to cultivating an academic community where learning, growth, and mutual respect can thrive. Its purpose is to articulate the fundamental rights that protect students in their pursuit of education and the responsibilities they assume as members of the University community. By setting out these guiding principles, the Statement promotes a balanced environment of inquiry, accountability, and shared commitment to the University's mission.

Scope:

This Statement applies to all Trinity University students, regardless of classification, enrollment status, or residential location. It provides a framework for interpreting University policies and community standards, and it operates in coordination with the Student Handbook, the Student Conduct System, and other applicable University policies. The Statement reflects the University's expectations for student conduct and engagement as members of an educational community.

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 Affairs.

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

While the University is committed to respecting the privacy and autonomy of its students, it also has a responsibility to maintain a safe, healthy, and secure living environment for the entire campus community. Thus, when circumstances warrant it, University employees are authorized to enter and search a student's room to ensure the health or safety of residents or when a University employee has reason to believe that a University policy or state/federal law is being violated. The student should be present, if possible, during a search. For more information, see

Appendix A: Room Entry and Search Process.

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.

Appendix A: Room Entry and Search Process

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this document is to outline the procedures and conditions under which University staff may enter and search student living spaces. While the University is committed to respecting the privacy and autonomy of its students, it also has a responsibility to maintain a safe, healthy, and secure living environment for the entire campus community. Thus, when circumstances warrant it, University employees are authorized to enter and search a student's room to ensure the health or safety of residents or when a University employee has reason to believe that a University policy or state/federal law is being violated. This process is designed to ensure that any entry or search is conducted fairly, transparently, and in accordance with University guidelines, safeguarding both the students' rights and the University's responsibility to uphold community standards.

TYPES OF ROOM ENTRY AND SEARCHES

1. Entry for Maintenance and Facilities Inspections

    a. Authorized University personnel may enter a student residence without student consent to conduct general and routine inspections for health, safety, and building maintenance purposes.
    b. Scheduled maintenance and upkeep.
    c. Completion of student-initiated requests.
    d. Unplanned and emergency maintenance.
        1. Follow-up inspections may be performed to ensure completion of projects or adherence to staff requests as outlined in the initial inspection or process.

2. Entry without Consent in a Health or Safety Emergency

a. Any authorized University employee may enter a student residence without consent when the employee has a reasonable cause to believe that such entry is necessary on an emergency basis to protect the health or safety of persons.
b. If the emergency or safety situation is related to alcohol or other drugs, the University's Responsible Friend Initiative will apply.
c. Given the situation, an extensive search process may be required.
d. Items that are a threat to safety, including alcohol, drugs, weapons, etc.. will be confiscated.
e. The University will follow emergency protocols related to mental health and medical situations.

3.Entry and Search by Consent of the Student

a. Any authorized University employee may enter a student's residence if the student resident(s) gives voluntary, verbal consent. The student's consent must be freely given and must not be based on coercion or threats by the University and must not be occasioned by a student's fear of reprisal for failure to give consent.
b. The entry and search by the employee must be limited to the scope of the consent given by the student.
c. For example, if the student consents to entry of the room by the employee, the employee is not entitled to search the student's belongings without obtaining further consent to do so.
d. Any student who is a resident of the room, suite, or apartment may consent to entry of the authorized University employee and to the search of that student's personal belongings. However, no student may consent to the search of another student's bedroom, closets, locker, suitcases, or other areas under the primary control of another student.

4.Entry without Consent on Suspicion of University Policy or State, Local, or Federal Law Violations

a. If the Director of Residential Life or the Director's designee, after hearing an employee's or a student's statements to that effect, believes that a search of a particular student residence will produce evidence of a crime, or a violation of University policies, the Director of ResidentialLife or the Director's designee may approve the Coordinator on Call to conduct a plain sight search or request that TUPD review the evidence to see if an extensive search is warranted.
b. The processes for such searches are as follows:
    1. Plain Sight Observation

1. A Residential Life Coordinator on Call and/or a TUPD Officer who has reasonable cause to believe that a violation of a University policy or federal or state law by a particular student has occurred may search a student residence. The resulting search will be limited to what is in plain sight in bedrooms, closets, bathrooms, and balconies. Any evidence found in a plain sight search may be used for campus disciplinary purposes.
2. Extensive Search
    1. The Director of Residential Life on Call and Coordinator on Call will work with TUPD to determine whether an extensive search of a student's residence is warranted.
    If the extensive search is approved,
    2. TUPD will secure a warrant and move forward with the search process. A student's room may be sealed off from entry while a warrant is obtained. TUPD will communicate with the student(s) and the University accordingly.

REPORTING ALLEGED VIOLATIONS

The University reserves the right to report alleged violations of the Student Code of Conduct to the Dean of Students' office. In serious cases, such as allegations of criminal drug activity or violence, TUPD may initiate the law enforcement process.

Terms & Definitions

Terms and Definitions:

Term:	Definition:
Reasonable Cause	Refers to a credible, specific, and objective basis to believe that a violation of University policies, regulations, and/or federal, state or local laws has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur within a student's living space.
Probable Cause	Based on direct observations during a plain sight observation, reliable reports from other students or staff, noticeable odors, sounds, or other evidence that reasonably suggests a violation of safety, security, law and/or student code of conduct. Probable cause must be grounded in factual information rather than speculation or suspicion alone.
Student Residence	The residence hall room, suite, or apartment occupied by a student or students and owned by the University.
Plain Sight	Within plain sight of the residential life team member or TUPD officer; includes

Term:	Definition:
Observation	items on/under desks and beds, on the floor, in individual bedrooms, in closets, bathrooms, balconies, etc. Students may be asked to open drawers, closets, refrigerators, etc., but it is at the student's discretion to agree to or deny the request.
Extensive Search	With probable cause, TUPD will request to search the room with permission from the student. If given, TUPD will complete a full search of the room. If the student does not give permission and TUPD determines that an extensive search is needed, TUPD must obtain a search warrant to open and search drawers, refrigerators, containers, luggage, safes, etc. The room would be sealed at this time to allow for the warrant process to take place.

Revision Management

Revision History Log:

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Vice President Approval:

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