



Freedom of Expression at Hope College

MISSION

The mission of Hope College is to educate students for lives of leadership and service in a global society through academic and co-curricular programs of recognized excellence in the liberal arts and in the context of the historic Christian faith.

CHRISTIAN ASPIRATIONS

Hope aspires to be faithful. Hope aspires to be welcoming. Hope aspires to be transformational.

VIRTUES OF PUBLIC DISCOURSE

Humility to Listen. Hospitality to Welcome. Patience to Understand. Courage to Challenge. Honesty to Speak the Truth in Love.

RATIONALE FOR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION STATEMENT

At Hope College, we are guided by the historic Christian faith, Christian Aspirations, and Virtues of Public Discourse. Believing that “what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart...” (Matthew 15:18), the College is “committed to freedom of inquiry in the pursuit of truth and knowledge in every field of study, confident that all truth is God’s truth.” With that said, claims and counterclaims should be motivated by pursuing and interrogating truth—not to degrade another person or group of people created and loved by God.

We know that our faculty, staff, and students will disagree on questions of religion, sexuality, politics, race, economics, and a whole host of other theological, moral, and social questions. We do not shy away from these differences, including dissenting opinions. Often, free expression of dissenting opinions has led to systematic changes for the advancement of communities, particularly marginalized communities.

At Hope, we approach these differences of perspective with the strong belief that the powerful love of God unites more tightly than any socially constructed division. With God’s love in mind, the College strives to protect free and open inquiry, discussion, and debate in light of our historic Christian faith and our Virtues of Public Discourse, helping us achieve our Christian Aspirations. Accordingly, the College commits to fostering an environment where its members feel safe to speak their minds, from a place of love, without fear of reprisal.

To this end, this college-wide Freedom of Expression Statement provides moral and legal protection to all our members. It demonstrates that Hope is committed to freedom of expression and inquiry. This statement derives from our Mission, Christian Aspirations, Virtues of Public Discourse, and commitment to the liberal arts.



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FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION STATEMENT

The College extends to its faculty, staff, and students freedom and protection for the expression of their religious, philosophical, literary, artistic, political, or scientific views. Expressing a viewpoint does not, standing alone, constitute a violation of Hope College policies. The College values the expression of diverse perspectives and ideas and constructive engagement that seeks to pursue and investigate claims of truth.

The protections offered under this statement are broad, but not absolute or without limitation. Along with Hope's Mission, Virtues of Public Discourse, Christian Aspirations, the policies and guidelines of Hope College (including those in all handbooks) serve as frames for expressions of speech and conduct.

The College's commitment to freedom of expression and intellectual curiosity do not protect speech or expressive conduct that violates the law or college policies, which includes but is not limited to: true threats, defamation, discriminatory harassment, incitement to imminent violence, violence, "fighting words," and destruction of property. Hope also reserves the right to impose reasonable restrictions on when, where, and how expression is disseminated in order to prevent speech which substantially disrupts the learning or working environment, or otherwise interferes with the normal operations of the College. These time, place, and manner restrictions are ordinarily outlined in college policies and procedures and are resonant with the mission, Christian Aspirations and Virtues of Public Discourse.

As we seek God's truth, let us engage with one another in a manner that is consistent with our belief that all people are created by God and bear the image of God.