



Policy

Title: Free Speech

Policy Statement:

The Board of Governors is committed to supporting and protecting freedom of expression within the college community and all others present at the College.

Approved: Original copy signed by the Chair of the Board
(Daniel Vandermeulen, Chair of the Board)

November 21, 2019
(Date)

Sponsorship: Governance

To Be Reviewed: November 21, 2024

Review and Revision Date:

First Approval Date: November 21, 2019

Stakeholders Consulted: (Senior Leadership Team; September 3, 2019); (Policy Review Committee; October 8, 2019)

Reference to other Documents:

Alberta Human Rights Act, Revised Statutes of Alberta 2000, Chapter A-25.5
Facilities and Ancillary Services – Use of College Facilities by External Users Procedure
Governance – Board Communication Policy
Governance – Board of Governors Code of Conduct Policy
Governance – Safe Disclosure Policy
Human Resources – Employees Code of Conduct Policy
Human Resources – Respectful Workplace Policy
Student Services – Student Appeals Procedure
Student Services – Student Conduct Policy

Definitions:

College community includes all members of the Board of Governors, employees, students, designated contractors, alumni, retirees and guests.

Free Speech is the freedom of expression; meaning the right to speak, write, listen, challenge and learn.

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to support and protect freedom of expression as essential to discovery, critical assessment, effective dissemination of knowledge and ideas and social and economic advancement. This applies to the entire college community as well as guests and all others present at Northern Lakes College.

Guidelines:

Northern Lakes College is a place that allows and encourages open discussion and diverse and free inquiry. It is a learning environment where ideas and viewpoints can be explored, discussed freely and debated openly without fear of reprisal – even if these are considered to be controversial or conflict with the views of some members of the college community. Members of the College Community will have the broadest latitude to speak, write, listen, and, challenge ideas and learn.

Although the College greatly values civility and all college community shares the responsibility to maintain a climate of mutual respect, it is not the role of the College to shield members of the college community from ideas and opinions that they may find disagreeable or offensive. It is up to individuals and not the College to make such judgments for themselves and to debate and challenge ideas that they find unacceptable.

Members of the college community are free to criticize and contest the views of others; however, they may not obstruct or interfere with the freedom of others to express their views. The rights of others to express or hear ideas must also be respected. The College may reasonably regulate the time, place and manner of freedom of expression to ensure that it does not disrupt normal operations and ordinary activities nor endanger the safety of others.

Speech that violates the law, including the Alberta Human Rights Act, is prohibited. Speech that constitutes harassment, a threat or hate speech is also not allowed. Other context-specific boundaries to freedom of expression may also apply, such as those arising out of the terms of employment and collective agreements.

Existing college mechanisms and processes will be used to handle complaints and ensure compliance with the policy. Complaints that remain unresolved may be referred to a member of the Executive Team. Existing disciplinary measures will apply to those whose actions are contrary to this policy.