

Dartmouth Policy on Institutional Restraint: Statements from Dartmouth and its academic units (12/24)

<https://policies.dartmouth.edu/policy/institutional-restraint-statements-dartmouth-and-its-academic-units>

Summary of Policy

The Board of Trustees and the following senior leaders (or their designees) are the recognized institutional spokespeople for Dartmouth: the President, the Provost, the Senior Vice President for Communications, the Director of Media Relations, and the General Counsel.

Dartmouth seeks to foster a community where faculty, students, and staff engage complex issues. To provide space for diverse viewpoints to be raised and fully considered, Dartmouth should exercise general restraint in issuing institutional statements. This general policy of restraint applies to the leaders of all Dartmouth's schools and academic subunits.

Affected Parties

All Students, All Faculty, All Staff

Policy Statement

Dartmouth is committed to free speech and open inquiry and seeks a community in which a diversity of viewpoints can be freely shared and exchanged to promote deeper understanding of complex issues and ideas. Moreover, Dartmouth supports and protects the academic freedom of faculty to engage in scholarly activity.

Any communication from Dartmouth's designated spokespersons related to core mission that is conveyed to the public, the entire Dartmouth community, or its schools, is an institutional statement. To provide space for diverse viewpoints to be raised and fully considered, Dartmouth should exercise general restraint in issuing institutional statements.

Restraint at the institutional level protects and enhances freedom of expression because institutional endorsement for a specific position or belief may deter community members who do not share that belief from expressing their skepticism or opposition. An institution committed to inquiry and open discourse should, therefore, issue institutional statements sparingly – typically when external events have a direct impact upon the relationship of the institution to its members.

When confronted with issues directly relating to Dartmouth's mission, senior leaders will reaffirm Dartmouth's core values and commit to taking actions in support thereof.

Institutional spokespersons for Dartmouth shall be limited to: the Board of Trustees, the President, the Provost, the Senior Vice President for Communications, the Director of Media Relations, and the General Counsel (or their designees). No other individual, group, or department has the authority to issue official statements or speak on behalf of Dartmouth.

This general policy of restraint, with exceptions for speaking on issues that affirm core values related to their missions or making their communities aware of resources, applies to the leaders of all Dartmouth's schools and academic subunits.

Dartmouth community members are free to make statements as individuals, including, for example, as subject-matter experts. Such statements must be clearly made in an individual capacity and should include a disclaimer that community members are not speaking on behalf of Dartmouth.

Statements by other academic units

The priority afforded to open, inclusive expression applies within Dartmouth schools and its academic units as it does in the broader Dartmouth community. Therefore, the principle of restraint should guide statements from Dartmouth's schools. The dean of each of Dartmouth's schools, or their designees, shall be the only official(s) with the authority to issue statements on behalf of the school.

For similar reasons, the principle of restraint should guide statements from academic units like departments, programs, centers, and institutes. That said, academic units are loci of specialized scholarly expertise and academic practice. On matters where such expertise applies, academic units may choose to issue public statements informed by their expertise.

Academic units should be attentive to the beliefs of all their faculty, students, and staff members, and cognizant of the possibility that those with minority perspectives may be reluctant to express their views. On matters where the expertise in scholarship and academic practice located in an academic unit is salient, members of that unit may decide to issue a public statement or to endorse a statement produced by another source. Such statements and endorsements must conform to the following practices:

- Before issuing a specific public statement or endorsement, and in a process separate from deliberation on any specific public statement or endorsement, the academic unit must establish the list of unit members who are enfranchised to propose and to vote on public statements or endorsements. Enfranchised members may include tenure-line faculty, non-tenure-line faculty, research associates, graduate students, and staff.
- Votes on any proposed statement or endorsement must be conducted anonymously.
- For any statement or endorsement the unit publishes, it must include a list of the categories of members enfranchised to vote (for example, "tenure-line faculty, lecturers, and research faculty") and the vote tally – the number of enfranchised members in favor, against, abstaining, and not voting.
- Before publication, the academic unit should inform the Provost of any statement it intends to publish or endorse.
- Public statements or endorsements should be published in a separate location from the unit's main channel of communications on curricular and administrative matters, campus activities, unit initiatives and programs, and resources available to students and unit members. Currently, the main channels of communications are the homepages of unit websites. In this context, the academic unit may establish a webpage other than its homepage to host public statements and endorsements from its members. Any statements or endorsements from the academic unit that preexist these guidelines should be moved from their current location to the unit's location dedicated to public statements and endorsements.
- Public statements or endorsements must include a clear disclaimer that the unit is not speaking for Dartmouth as a whole.
- Per the [Lobbying and Political Activities policy](#), public statements and endorsements may not "participate in, or intervene in... any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office", "or otherwise attempting to influence legislation."
- No individual should purport to speak on behalf of the academic unit in any communication unless they have completed this process.