

Free Speech and the Right to Take a Stand on Issues

Students have the right to take a stand on issues, the right to examine and discuss questions of interest to them, and the right to support causes, by orderly means, which do not disrupt the regular and essential campus operation. Students have the right of protection against prejudiced academic, athletic and/or activity assessment. At the same time, students are responsible for maintaining the standard of academic, athletic and activity performance established by the responsible faculty or staff member in which they are enrolled. Faculty and staff members are to make every effort to assure unimpeded intellectual diversity in their classes and activities, and to avoid even the appearance that students who disagree with their views on matters of opinion will in any way be penalized or put at a disadvantage. Any formal written complaint to this effect filed by a student will be referred to the appropriate college administrator, who will investigate and decide whether disciplinary action is necessary. If action is taken, it will be done according to due process in accordance with the statutes of Fort Valley State University (FVSU) and the policies set forth in the University System of Georgia (USG) Academic Affairs Handbook and the Board of Regents (BoR) Policy Manual. Policies describing disruptive, obstructive, and disorderly behavior and disorderly conduct are described in the Inappropriate Conduct section of the Student Code of Conduct (pg. 56), as well as the Disruptive Behavior section, Article II, Section I, within the Student Handbook (pgs. 61-62).

Speakers on Campus:

Fort Valley State University is firmly committed to First Amendment rights, which include freedom of speech, freedom of expression and the right to assemble peaceably. Students will be afforded the opportunity to listen to speakers representing a wide variety of opinions and beliefs. However, in order to insure equal opportunity for all persons, preserve order on campus, and provide a secure campus environment, the University reserves the right to regulate the time, manner, and place of expression.

Public Forum Area:

A Public Forum Area is defined as an area on the FVSU campus that is specifically designated for the expression of various beliefs and opinions as anticipated by and articulated in this document. The Public Forum Areas are identified as follows:

- At or near the Fountain area within the Historic Quad
- At or near the Hunt Statue within the Wildcat Commons open area
- At or near the Wildcat statue near the Student Lyons Center
- At or near the oval between Bond building, the Infirmary, and the Pettigrew Center

The Student Amenities Center, the Cafeteria and the Wildcat Commons Clubhouse are not appropriate venues unless the speaker has been invited by an authorized student organization or it is a part of a student sponsored event. Speakers interested in using indoor space can inquire into the availability of Woodard Gym and the Pettigrew Center.

While students, and the authorized guest speakers of recognized student organizations, are not required to utilize a Public Forum Area for their free speech expression(s), they must remain mindful of how they

express themselves in the various areas of campus where certain actions might become disruptive to the orderly flow and administration of campus. These areas include but are not limited to the following:

- Buildings and areas where classes or FVSU ceremonies and events are currently taking place
- Administration buildings (Troup and Huntington) during normal business hours
- Areas that might interfere with the free flow of traffic or the ingress/egress to campus buildings

Any recognized student organization may invite speakers to campus following the procedures for the Campus Life Department. Failure to complete the necessary form(s) may result in a denial of the event in question.

Speakers and Conduct:

The following policies and regulations shall govern the campus appearances of non-FVSU speakers, students, faculty or staff who wish to utilize the Public Forum Area and other spaces on campus.

1. First priority for use of University facilities will be given to student, academic, or administrative functions at FVSU.
2. Non-FVSU speakers, students, faculty or staff who wish to utilize the Public Forum Area must inform the Office of Events Management in advance to confirm the location's availability for a particular timeframe. At least 2-business days' advance notice is required, or the request may be denied.
3. There shall be no interference with the free flow of traffic nor the ingress and egress to buildings on campus.
4. There shall be no interference with educational activities inside or outside of buildings. Depending on the time of day and location of the event, the usage of sound and voice amplifying equipment may be restricted or prohibited.
5. There shall be no events between the hours of 8:00pm and 8:00am inside or outside of the Wildcat Commons, with the exception of authorized events inside of the Wildcat Commons Clubhouse. The Vice Provost for Student Success and the Dean of Students are empowered to make exceptions to this rule for the purpose of facilitating University sponsored events.
6. There shall be no harassment of passersby or other disruptions of normal activities.
7. There shall be no interference with scheduled University ceremonies or events.
8. Whomever makes the reservation shall be responsible for seeing that the area is left clean and in good order. Failure to do so may result in FVSU assessing the event organizer a fine equivalent to the reasonable value of the anticipated clean-up costs, as determined in the sole discretion of FVSU.
9. Malicious or unwarranted damage to, or destruction of, property owned or operated by the University is prohibited, and violators shall be held financially and legally responsible.
10. The damage or destruction of property owned or operated by faculty, staff, students or visitors to campus as a result of an event pursuant to this policy may subject the violator(s) to disciplinary measures

including, but not limited to being held fiscally responsible and/or being suspended or permanently removed from the University.

11. A speaker's appearance on campus does not necessarily involve an endorsement of his/her views by the University or its students, faculty, or staff.

12. Depending on the size of the event, security may be necessary. The decision on the need for security is at the sole discretion of FVSU, and the event organizer may be held responsible for the payment of any increased cost to FVSU for the staffing of the additional security officers.

13. Any flyers related to an event must be approved by the Campus Life Department prior to posting.

14. Any individuals involved in a spontaneous or organized protest of any speaker on campus are expected to adhere to not only the mandates of this policy, but also any other policy, handbook, or code of conduct promulgated by FVSU or the BoR. While peaceful protests may be acceptable, any violent verbal or physical outbursts, or other failures to maintain proper decorum, may result in fines, discipline, civil or criminal charges, and/or any other disciplinary measures deemed prudent.

15. Any campaign-related activity must adhere to the provisions of this policy. Additionally, no two competing political candidates can be on campus at the same time, unless they are invited by a recognized student organization, participating in a student sponsored political forum, or participating in an academic-related activity at the request of a faculty member. In instances where a political candidate is invited to campus, candidates from opposing parties or with opposing views must also be permitted access to participate in the event or otherwise provided equal access to campus.