



THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

University Policies

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Student Life Presentations Policy

Approved by:

Board of Trustees

History:Approved by
Board of Trustees -- June 5, 1990Reaffirmed by
Board of Trustees -- June 3, 2008

Additional History

Related Policies:**Additional References:** [Interim Reflections Task Force on Catholic Bishops and Catholic Politicians](#)**Responsible Official:** [Vice President for Student Life](#) (202) 319-5714**I. Preamble**

While the CUA president is charged by the trustees with ultimate responsibility for university policy with respect to presentations (films, speakers and performers invited to campus) sponsored by registered student organizations, it is important that he or she have the maximum benefit of meaningful faculty and student participation in those rare cases where the manner or subject matter of such a presentation is objected to by others in the university community. To achieve this goal, the following policy and procedures are hereby promulgated.

II. Policy for Presentations and Balanced Programs

The Catholic University of America as a university is dedicated to the pursuit of truth wherever it can be found. Faculty and students enjoy the academic freedom essential for genuine scholarly study and research. Academic freedom applies to activities of faculty members in their writings, lecturing and teaching. Academic freedom applies to students in their access to all legitimate sources of information and in their participation in academic dialogue. Protection from governmental constraint on freedom of speech is ensured by the United States Constitution for all persons. This freedom to express oneself verbally, in writing, or by peaceful demonstration, even in significantly controversial matters, may be constrained in a private university by other values which are held to be equal, greater or prior. The Catholic University of America, as a private institution, is not required to provide a forum for advocates whose values are counter to those of the university or the Roman Catholic Church. The university recognizes a distinction between objective explanation and advocacy in the presentation of issues. This means, therefore, that it may refuse permission to prospective speakers who in its judgment promote or advocate such counter values. This also means that balanced programs explaining positions on both sides of controversial societal, political, moral and/or ecclesiastical issues may be staged in the pursuit of a more complete educational experience and a greater understanding of the issues. Hence, in such matters, even in those in which the Roman Catholic Church has expressed clear and unambiguous official teaching, programs involving knowledgeable spokespersons representing opposing viewpoints may be considered to be appropriate within the university setting. Conversely, programs designed to promote action rather than understanding, while not necessarily inappropriate in themselves, are not clearly "educational" in a strict sense. The university refuses to allow advocacy programs judged by the administration to be inconsistent with the university's underlying value base and in so doing exercises its freedom as a private, value-based institution.

~Approved by Board of Trustees, June 5, 1990.

The university, operating within the framework of the foregoing, is committed to its various constituencies to avoid the following:

1. blasphemy: the act of expressing irreverence for God or those things held sacred;
2. pornography: explicit sex lacking any artistic merit, portrayed in a vulgar and exploitative manner;
3. calumny: false and malicious accusation;
4. advocacy: meaning the act of pleading for, supporting, inciting or recommending active espousal of (as opposed to scholarly and abstract discourses), examining or questioning the legal, academic or moral propriety of the subject under discussion, constituting a clear and present danger of:
 - a. the violent overthrow of the government of the United States or any political subdivision thereof;
 - b. the destruction of, damage to, or the unlawful seizure or subversion of the university's buildings or other property;
 - c. the disruption, impairment or interference with the university's regularly scheduled classes or other educational functions;
 - d. coercion, threats, intimidations, blasphemy, defamation, physical harm or other invasions of the lawful rights of the members of the university community;
 - e. any campus disorder of a violent nature;
 - f. illegal acts constituting a deprivation of the civil or property rights of others.

III. Implementation and Enforcement

The Office of the University Center, Student Programs and Events (UCSPE) is routinely responsible for the implementation and enforcement of this policy. Any member of the university community should feel free to contact UCSPE with questions regarding the policy.

UCSPE will establish procedures for the implementation of the policy. Those procedures will be published in the Student Organization Manual and placed on the UCSPE web site.

Advance approval must be obtained by all registered student organizations before program planning. It is suggested that student organizations solicit the input of students, staff and faculty before presenting a proposal to UCSPE. Student organizations should be aware of the intellectual and/or moral climate and the spirit of the times before planning a presentation. A controversial program during certain critical times may promote unnecessary or undesirable ill will from within and without the university community, with no resulting benefit to anyone.

With all presentations, it is understood that speakers, performers and/or films do not necessarily reflect the views and values of the university or of the Roman Catholic Church.

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