

SOUTHWESTERN

LAW SCHOOL Los Angeles, CA

Free Expression Policy

Board of Trustees policy approved March 27, 2025; approved by the faculty on February 21, 2025. Effective immediately.

Revision history: None; new policy.

Related policies: Policy to Prevent Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation; Student Honor Code; Academic Freedom Policy; Political Activities Policy; Social Media Policy for Student Organizations; Code of Student Professionalism and Conduct

Scheduled Review Date: March 2028 (Office of the President & Dean)

A. Background and Scope

Southwestern Law School is committed to a learning environment where diverse viewpoints are encouraged, academic freedom is protected, and all community members feel welcomed, included, and valued. Southwestern values the free exchange of ideas and provides venues for critical and respectful dialogue across a range of perspectives.

Effective legal education and the development of the law require the free, robust, and uninhibited sharing of ideas that reflect a wide range of viewpoints. Becoming an effective advocate or counselor requires that students learn how to engage in candid and civil discourse in respectful disagreement with others while advancing reasoned and evidence-based arguments. Concerns about civility and mutual respect do not justify barring discussion of ideas because they are controversial, or even offensive or disagreeable to some.

Southwestern protects the rights of faculty, students, and staff to communicate ideas that may be controversial or unpopular, including through robust debate, demonstrations, or protests. Southwestern recognizes free speech consistent with limits of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and California's Leonard Law, California Education Code §§ [94367](#) and [66301](#).

Southwestern facilities, grounds, and other resources exist to fulfill the law school's educational objectives, including its primary educational mission of teaching, research, and public service; promote a robust exchange of diverse viewpoints; and foster

community involvement. The use of Southwestern's facilities does not imply acceptance or endorsement by Southwestern of the views expressed as part of any free expression activity.

B. Expressing Dissent or Disagreement

Southwestern faculty, staff, students, and invited guests may engage in robust debate, peacefully demonstrate or protest, or express disagreement but may not interfere with a speaker's ability to communicate or attendees' ability to participate. To promote free expression, Southwestern recognizes the right of faculty, staff, students, and invited guests to distribute visual communications and speak publicly on campus, subject to reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions.

Disrupting scheduled events is not permissible regardless of whether the disruption occurs inside or outside the space or location of the scheduled event or whether the scheduled event occurs on campus, off campus, or online.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of activities that may significantly interfere with the lawful rights of others or impede law school operations:

- denying or infringing upon the lawful rights of students, faculty, staff, or invited guests;
- substantially interfering with classes, meetings, events, interviews, ceremonies, public events, research, administration, and other law school activities;
- obstructing or restricting free movement of persons on the campus, in campus buildings, and in off-campus locations where law school activities take place;
- restricting access to or the use of offices, classrooms, courtrooms, library, administrative, or other campus spaces or facilities;
- endangering or threatening the safety of any person in the law school community;
- destroying, defacing, or causing property damage or loss, including defacing signs related to an event;
- preventing a person from speaking or being heard (e.g., heckling, making noise, shouting down a speaker, standing in the area of a room reserved for the speaker, or blocking the speaker, event organizer, or staff access to AV equipment);
- blocking attendees' ability to view the speaker;
- using or implementing technology features, such as the mute or camera button;
- creating or causing sanitary or other health hazards; or
- violating the law, including the law of trespass, or other Southwestern policies relating to activities and events.

C. Content Neutral Restrictions

Southwestern may restrict expression that violates the law, defames a specific individual, constitutes a genuine threat or harassment, or unjustifiability invades substantial privacy or confidentiality interest.

Neither scheduled events nor dissenting speech may compromise the physical safety of any person, whether they are attending the event or not. Using or threatening force or violence, such as assaulting a speaker or audience member, is prohibited.

Southwestern may reasonably regulate the time, place, and manner of expression for reasons unrelated to its content, including to ensure that it does not disrupt the normal activities of Southwestern. Events or protest activities must comply with any content-neutral procedures or restrictions instituted for the event or activity. Southwestern retains the discretion to limit events at or sponsored by Southwestern to members of the law school community.

D. Policy Violations

Students who are alleged to have violated this policy may be subject to discipline under the Honor Code or the Student Code of Professionalism and Conduct. Staff who are alleged to have violated this policy may be subject to discipline pursuant to the Employee Handbook. Faculty who are alleged to have violated this policy may be subject to discipline under relevant portions of the Faculty Handbook. When faculty are involved and the matter also involves academic freedom issues, the process outlined in the Academic Freedom Policy will be followed. In addition, if the safety and security of members of the Southwestern community is implicated, the law school may take other measures, such as asking an individual to leave the presentation or event.

E. Course Offerings

This policy does not preclude Southwestern from identifying the courses that will be taught, requiring courses adequately prepare students to meet specific learning outcomes, or requiring faculty, students, or staff to clarify in appropriate circumstances that their views are not statements by or on behalf of the law school.

F. Policy Revisions

Southwestern expressly reserves the right to change or modify any aspect of this policy at any time, with at least 5 days' notice to the law school community. It also reserves the right to implement safety and security measures with or without notice.