

## **Statement on Freedom of Expression [DRAFT]**

*Knowles, 30 Nov. 2017*

In support of the free and open exchange of ideas from a diversity of perspectives, Eastern Oregon University is committed to

- The right of citizens to freedom of expression, as guaranteed by the U.S. and Oregon constitutions.
- Freedom of expression as fundamental to the dialogue that supports learning and the development of new ideas in an institution of higher education. In this spirit, it is not the role of the university to protect individuals or groups from offensive speech but to protect the rights of individuals and groups to express themselves and to contest the expression of others. Belief that a position is offensive or false is not grounds for silencing but an opportunity for debate.
- Equity and inclusion. EOU recognizes that some speech risks the climate of inclusivity necessary for equitable educational opportunity. In most circumstances, an inclusive environment is best supported by more rather than less dialogue so that ideas can be aired and addressed. In such dialogue, the university may exercise its own right to contest expression that opposes the institution's commitment to equity and inclusion.
- Civility and mutual respect. However, while freedom of expression is most comfortably exercised in an environment of civility and mutual respect, concerns about civility cannot stifle expression.

Exceptions to the university's commitment may occur when expression violates the law, for example, in the case of defamation, harassment, or confidentiality. Additionally, the university may limit the time, manner, and place of expression to protect ordinary operations of the institution and safety of the campus community (see the Public Demonstrations Policy).