



Dear Students:

Last week, a number of political messages were chalked on the sidewalks in and around the Lincoln Park campus by two registered student organizations. Similar chalk messages have appeared at other campuses around the country as part of an orchestrated effort by national political groups. The messages included partisan political slogans and phrases, as well as direct support of certain candidates for president.

While these chalk messages are part of national agendas in a heated political battle, they appeared on campus at a time of significant racial tension in our country and on college campuses. DePaul is no exception. The university has been addressing campus climate issues in an effort to provide an inclusive and supportive educational environment. In this context, many students, faculty and staff found the chalk messages offensive, hurtful and divisive.

These messages raise complex issues which interact with each other: providing an inclusive and supportive educational environment, DePaul's mission and Vincentian values, the importance of freedom of expression in the academic enterprise, and civic involvement in the national election process. Given these complexities, it is important to clarify university policies and institutional actions.

Political Campaigning Activities on Campus

Consistent with our educational mission, we promote and encourage students' engagement in the political process. However, as a 501(c)3 tax-exempt non-profit organization, the university is significantly limited in the types of political activities it can promote or support. In accordance with federal regulations, DePaul may not engage in any activity in support of or opposition to any candidate for public office, federal, state or local. In practice, this means no partisan political advertising may be conducted on campus that could in any way be attributed to DePaul University. Additional information is provided in the [Political Campaigning Activities](#) policy in the DePaul University Policies & Procedures Manual.

Questions concerning any campus activities associated with political campaigns or parties should be directed to the [Office of Student Involvement](#). In order to provide some clarification, listed below are several illustrative, but not exhaustive, examples of activities, some permitted and some not.

- Individual students may wear political paraphernalia such as t-shirts, hats, buttons, stickers, etc.
- Students may display campaign signs, flyers or posters in their personal room in a manner not visible to the public: so, not on a window or exterior door.
- Students may form partisan political student organizations, if properly registered with the Office of Student Involvement, to hold meetings and events to inform and educate interested members of the campus community.

- Registered student organizations may set up tables for political candidates in the Student Center to provide literature and political information to the campus community.
 - However, these tables must clearly indicate that the information and materials provided do not reflect the views or opinions of DePaul University.
- Students or student organizations may not post partisan political flyers, posters, signs or images on University bulletin board, buildings, electronic message boards, forums or sidewalks. This includes chalking on campus property.

DePaul University may remove any materials it determines is in violation of these policies and will hold accountable the individuals or organizations responsible for such violations. However, students should not take it upon themselves to remove materials displayed on campus, whether on bulletin boards, sidewalks or other areas. Rather, concerns or questions about the policy should be brought to the [Office of Student Involvement](#).

Freedom of Expression

As a university, DePaul is committed to fostering a community that welcomes open discourse and has established [Guiding Principles on Speech and Expression](#). As noted in these principles, "by remaining open to a broad range of ideas and opinions, we foster a mutual understanding, test our beliefs, and create the most effective conditions for seeking knowledge." Yet these principles also "insist that all speakers remember that **the right of expression carries with it the equally important responsibility to exercise that right with a conscientious respect for human dignity.**"

DePaul is a Catholic, Vincentian institution that values the human dignity of all persons, and encourages critical moral thinking and scholarship founded on principles that embody religious values and the highest ideals of our society. In a campus community in which we are dedicated to fostering an inclusive educational environment, but also to the right of everyone to express themselves freely, it is imperative that we acknowledge disparate views and intentionally create forums where issues can be discussed and debated to foster mutual understanding.

Throughout this campaign season, Student Affairs will work with students and faculty to conduct programs and forums in which opposing political views can be explored with constructive and meaningful dialogue. We encourage students to participate in these programs and gain perspectives on major issues in the upcoming elections.

DePaul is passionately committed to maintaining a diverse community which welcomes and supports students, faculty and staff of all races, gender identities, sexual orientations, religious traditions, abilities and political convictions. We know this diversity makes us all better people, requiring us to continually face our biases and challenge our assumptions. Rev. President Dennis Holtschneider, Provost Marten denBoer, the President's Diversity Council, myself and staff across the university have been working with students and student leaders to address concerns in our campus community in order to strengthen our inclusive educational environment. Further information on the university's actions to address concerns about race on campus is provided in [Father Holtschneider's message](#) to the campus community on March 30, 2016.

Maintaining an inclusive campus environment, and helping all community members feel welcome in this context, takes constant work and reflection. DePaul is an outstanding community, fully committed to this work, and I am certain that we can vigorously enter into this moment of public debate and attend to one another in the process.

Eugene L. Zdziarski, II, Ph.D.
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