

University of St. Thomas Policies

SPEAKER

Policy Number: G.04.01

SCOPE

All faculty, staff, students and student groups.

PURPOSE

The University of St. Thomas is committed to the Catholic intellectual tradition and the dialogue between faith and reason. By instructing students in analytical and logical thinking, we assist in the preparation of UST graduates for important roles in civic leadership and in their quest for truth. Our community is guided by the Basilian values of goodness, discipline, and knowledge.

We are also committed to the vision and norms for education as set out in *Ex corde ecclesiae*,² and we seek to act in accord with the statement of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops concerning Catholics in political life.³

To serve these objectives, members of the University community must be free to engage the full range of views on a variety of subjects and must also strive to maintain clarity about the identity of the University. Speakers may be invited to campus and events produced on campus that promote the University's values, as well as to events that involve the expression of ideas or opinions that are contrary to Catholic doctrines and teachings.

From time to time speakers or events can be problematic because they compromise our Catholic identity or offend our core values.⁴ In such cases the following considerations, modifications, or reasons for prohibition will apply.

POLICY/PROCEDURE

1. Requests

a. Faculty.

Faculty interested in inviting guest speakers to campus or hosting events on campus shall seek the timely advice of colleagues, appropriate department chairs, and appropriate deans, before arranging for speakers or events where it may be anticipated that the speech or event will offend the University's identity, values or mission. If the prospective invitation is questioned by a member of the UST community, the Vice President for Academic Affairs shall make the initial determination as to the propriety of the invitation after considering the matters outlined in sections 2 and 3.

b. Requests by Students or Student Groups.

A student or student group intending to invite a guest speaker to campus or to host an event for the public on campus must follow policies and procedures adopted by the Vice President for Student Affairs regarding guest speakers and events including obtaining advance approval from the Vice President for Student Affairs, or designee, so that the modifications will be considered before any invitation is extended.

c. Requests by Staff.

Members of the UST staff who wish to invite a guest speaker to campus or to host an event for the public on campus must follow policies and procedures adopted by the

University of St. Thomas Policies

appropriate executive regarding guest speakers and events including obtaining advance approval from the executive or designee, so that the modifications will be considered before any invitation is extended.

2. Review By Faculty and Administrators

- a. In reviewing any request for a guest speaker or event, where the speaker, event, or speech may compromise the Catholic identity and mission, the faculty, department, staff, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice President for Student Affairs, or designee, shall seek, where possible, modifications to the speech or event which, short of prohibiting it, would address the concerns and give consideration to:
 - i. The educational content and value of the proposed speech or event;
 - ii. The degree of faculty involvement in planning the speech or event;
 - iii. The academic or educational context for the speech or event; and
 - iv. The amount of co-sponsorship by faculty and campus organizations.

3. Modifications

- a. The concern about compromising our Catholic identity and mission may be addressed by applying the following modifications:
 - i. Issuing disclaimers;
 - ii. Requiring that a question and answer period immediately follow the speech or event;
 - iii. Creating counter programming at a different time;
 - iv. Balancing the speech or event with opposing views;
 - v. Changing the date or venue of the speech or event, or otherwise providing appropriate context for those attending;
 - vi. Other appropriate options.

4. Prohibition of Speech or Event

- a. Prohibition of Speech or Event. If the application of modifications from 3a is not possible or is inappropriate, an invitation may be withdrawn, or permission to invite a guest speaker or to host an event may be denied altogether if:
 - i. By advocating positions or activity contrary to Catholic teachings, the speaker, speech or event is likely to compromise or offend the University's core values or mission as a Catholic liberal arts institution, and the person or group seeking permission refuses to accept modification;
 - ii. There is a substantial risk that the speaker, speech or event would conflict with University policies concerning the creation of a hostile learning environment;
 - iii. The speech or event poses a substantial risk to the physical safety of members of the community;
 - iv. There is a substantial risk that the speech or event would disrupt University classes or obstruct access to campus facilities;
 - v. The speech or event would violate the civil or penal laws of the City of Houston, State of Texas, or the United States.

Notice: A decision by an administrator to deny or condition permission for a guest speaker or event must be provided in writing to the interested University party.

University of St. Thomas Policies

5. Appeal.

The administrator should strive to give the persons and groups supporting or opposing the speech or event, an opportunity to be heard. A party may appeal the administrative decision to the President. The President shall have final authority to grant, deny, or condition usage of University property for any guest speaker or event. When the President exercises his authority to permit, condition, or deny permission for a guest speaker or event that has been questioned, the President will state his reasons in writing to the appropriate members of the University community.

6. Academic freedom.

This policy supplements the policy on academic freedom.

7. Annotations

Example of Disclaimer: An invitation to a guest speaker or the production of an event does not express or imply approval, endorsement, or sponsorship of the views expressed by the speaker or any aspect of the event by the University of St. Thomas or any of its community.

8. Endnotes

¹ This policy was adopted from a similar policy at Gonzaga University with permission from President Robert J. Spitzer, SJ

² [*Ex corde ecclesiae*] JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Constitution of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II on Catholic Universities, 15 August 1990.

³ [*Bishops Issue Statement on 'Catholic in Political Life' Washington (June 21, 2004)*] The text can be found at <http://www.usccb.org/bishops/catholicsinpoliticallife.htm>.

⁴ CONSTITUTION ON THE CHURCH IN THE MODERN WORLD (*Gaudium et Spes* sections 27, 51) Second Vatican Council December 7, 1965; John Paul II, *The Gospel of Life*, sections 12, 95.

APPROVED: Dr. Robert Ivany

Date of Original Formation: 9/1/2010

Revision Number:

Revision Date:

Effective Date: