

**Statement from the University of Denver's Freedom of Expression Committee
April 10, 2018**

The recently-formed Freedom of Expression Committee has been asked by members of our community to respond to an event being sponsored by the Federalist Society titled, "*When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Movement*." There is concern that allowing such an event to be hosted on campus threatens the value and questions the legitimacy of our transgender/genderqueer/beyond the binary community members and, thus, has the potential to constitute injury. We take this request very seriously.

This committee does not have the power or purview to deny a campus organization the right to speak or host invited speakers on campus. Nor do we hold that it is productive to censor speech. Rather, following the University of Denver Statement of Policies and Principles on Freedom of Expression, we hold that any form of expression designed to deny the full and equal standing of any member of our campus community deserves condemnation. We take our charge to be promoting full and free expression while simultaneously minimizing injury. The committee serves a fundamental educational purpose: to cultivate amongst constituencies across campus a deep understanding of and appreciation for the value of freedom of expression, particularly as that value intersects with other, equally central DU values, notably diversity and inclusivity. This type of event is one to which we would strive to provide avenues for students, faculty, and staff to respond. Potential responses that we have been discussing as a committee could be counter protests, teach-ins, debates, as well as other creative responses. In short, freedom of expression does not have to be restrictive, but productive. We, therefore, vociferously defend and support the right to speak back in novel ways, such as the panel sponsored by the DU OUTlaws, "*Transgender Rights and Contemporary Experiences* " to be held on April 11 at the Sturm College of Law.

Offering safe opportunities for exposure to diverse viewpoints helps us all develop new understandings, provides opportunities for intellectual engagement, and fosters character development. And such opportunities are critical for finding constructive ways to express our ideas and respond to others with whom we might disagree, both on and off campus. As a newly formed committee, we hope to grow as a campus resource and to evolve with the needs and tensions facing the DU community. In encouraging critical discussions surrounding freedom of expression, we recognize a need for there to be an open dialogue between this committee and the community we serve. To this end, we ask our community to direct any questions, concerns, and feedback to foe.committee-g@du.edu.

For more information on the Freedom of Expression Committee, please see:

- [DU Freedom of Expression Committee's website](#) and
- [University of Denver Statement of Policies and Principles on Freedom of Expression](#).