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Rights and Obligations of Speakers, Audience Members and Protesters at Public Presentations of the University of Michigan-Dearborn

Members of the UM-Dearborn community and their invited guests have the right to set forth their views and opinions and to listen, watch protest or otherwise participate in the communication.

UM-Dearborn has no obligation to ensure audience access to public events, to protect the rights of the speaker and those who wish to hear and communicate with the speaker, and to provide all with personal security.

Protestors have an obligation not to abuse their rights of free expression by harassing or intimidating speakers in ways that unduly interfere with free expression or communication between a speaker and members of an audience.

The prohibition against undue interference does not include suppression of the usual range of human reactions commonly displayed by an audience during a heated discussion of controversial topics, so long as such activities are consistent with the continuation of the speech and the communication of its content to the audience.

The broadcast range of speech and expression will be tolerated in public forums in order to facilitate the discussion and debate of ideas and issues. However, the intentional use of racial, ethnocentric or sexual invectives, epithets, slurs or utterances directly to attach or injure another individual rather than express or discuss an idea of philosophy are beyond the boundaries of protected speech. Additionally, malicious and intentional verbal threats of violence directed towards an individual, physical violence and destruction of property are misconduct and will be subject to discipline.

UM-Dearborn officials have a responsibility to make a judgment when there is a clear and present danger that the rights of free expression and communication will be infringed upon and to take appropriate measure to safeguard these rights.

The overall goal of UM-Dearborn officials during a disruption shall be to re-establish an atmosphere conducive to communication between the speaker and the audience in full respect of the rights of all parties.

Canceling, stopping an event, adjourning to another time or place, or allowing protracted interruption of a speech or meeting is inconsistent with full respect of the rights of free expression and communication of those present.

External Relations

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Policy owned by: External Relations

Last Reviewed: 4/2020

Next Review: 9/2021



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