

APPENDIX C

Alamo Colleges District Statement on Freedom of Expression

The early 2024 the Chancellor of the College District tasked a cross-college, representative, group of students, faculty staff and administrators to consider adoption of framework for expression, based on the Chicago Principles, to articulate the district-wide overarching commitment to free, robust, and uninhibited debate and deliberation among all members of the college district and individual college communities.

The workgroup has carefully reviewed the ACD (Alamo Colleges District) history and the unique histories of the colleges of the District, examined events at other institutions, and consulted a broad range of individuals both inside and outside the ACD community. After careful research and consideration, the workgroup recommended adoption of this statement modeled closely on the Chicago Principles which reflects the long-standing and distinctive ACD values and affirms the importance of maintaining and, indeed, celebrating those values for the future.

ACD and the colleges, from their earliest, formative, iterations have been dedicated to the preservation and celebration of the freedom of expression as an essential element of college culture.

Because the College District and each individual college are deeply committed to free and open inquiry in all matters, it guarantees all members of the Alamo Colleges District community the broadest possible latitude to speak, write, listen, challenge, and learn. Except insofar as limitations on that freedom are necessary to the functioning of the ACD and individual colleges fully respects and supports the freedom of all members of the ACD community “to discuss any problem that presents itself.”

Of course, the ideas of different members of the ACD community will often and quite naturally conflict. But it is not the proper role of the district or any college to attempt to shield individuals from ideas and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable, or even deeply offensive. Although the district and each college greatly value civility, and although all members of the ACD community share in the responsibility for maintaining a climate of mutual respect, concerns about civility and mutual respect can never be used as a justification for closing off discussion of ideas, however offensive or disagreeable those ideas may be to some members of our community.

The freedom to debate and discuss the merits of competing ideas does not, of course, mean that individuals may say whatever they wish, wherever they wish. ACD may restrict expression that violates the law, that falsely defames a specific individual, that constitutes a genuine threat or harassment, that unjustifiably invades substantial privacy or confidentiality interests, or that is otherwise directly incompatible with the functioning of the district or a college. In addition, the district or a college may reasonably regulate the time, place, and manner of expression to ensure that it does not disrupt the ordinary activities of the institution. But these are narrow exceptions to the general principle of freedom of expression, and it is vitally important that these exceptions never be used in a manner that is inconsistent with ACD’s commitment to a completely free and open discussion of ideas.

In a word, ACD and each college are fundamentally committed to the principle that debate or deliberation may not be suppressed because the ideas put forth are thought by some or even by most members of the ACD or a college community to be offensive, unwise, immoral, or wrong-headed. It is for the individual members of the ACD or college community, not for ACD or a college as an institution, to make those judgments for themselves, and to act on those judgments not by seeking to suppress speech, but by openly and vigorously contesting the ideas that they oppose. Indeed, fostering the ability of

members of the ACD and college communities to engage in such debate and deliberation in an effective and responsible manner is an essential part of our educational mission.

As a corollary to our commitment to protect and promote free expression, members of the ACD and college communities must also act in conformity with the principle of free expression. Although members of the community are free to criticize and contest the views expressed on campus, and to criticize and contest speakers who are invited to express their views on campus, they may not obstruct or otherwise interfere with the freedom of others to express views they reject or even loathe. To this end, the ACD and each college has a solemn responsibility not only to promote a lively and fearless freedom of debate and deliberation, but also to protect that freedom when others attempt to restrict it.

In the spirit of the Chicago Principles, without a vibrant commitment to free and open inquiry, a college ceases to be a college. The ACD and each college's long-standing commitment to this principle lies at the very core of our greatness. That is our inheritance, and it is our promise to the future.

Chicago University: Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression

Alamo Colleges District: Policy F.9.1 Protected Expression on Campus-Students' Rights and Responsibilities