

NSHE POLICY
TITLE 4, CHAPTER 1, SECTION 38
Freedom of Expression: Aspirational Statement of Values
March 1, 2019

Section 38. Freedom of Expression: Aspirational Statement of Values

The Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) and its eight institutions are committed to free and open inquiry in all matters and strive to afford all members of the NSHE 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 NSHE and its institutions, NSHE and its institutions fully respect and support the freedom of all its students, faculty, and staff to discuss any topic that presents itself, free of interference. NSHE and its institutions support addressing issues and controversies by the method of open discussion.

The freedom to debate and discuss the merits of ideas is both welcomed and encouraged. The climate of conflict among competing ideas is quite natural and NSHE and its institutions are appropriate spaces for discourse that inspires critical thought and promotes enhanced learning opportunities.

This freedom, however, is not absolute. In narrowly-defined circumstances, NSHE and its institutions may lawfully restrict expression and may reasonably regulate the time, place, and manner of expression consistent with First Amendment principles.

NSHE and its institutions are committed to the principle that it may not restrict or suppress debate or deliberation because the ideas put forth are thought to be offensive, unwise, immoral, or misguided. History shows that when institutions of higher education attempt to censor or punish the free expression of ideas, they undermine their core function of promoting rational discussion, inquiry, discovery, and the dissemination of knowledge. It is not the proper response of NSHE and its institutions to attempt to shield individuals from ideas and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable, or even deeply offensive. It is for members of the NSHE community to make those judgments for themselves.

Members of the NSHE community are encouraged to promote an atmosphere of mutual respect that is aligned with institutional values of inclusivity, diversity, and critical thinking. These values and this encouragement inform the vision of the community we aspire to be.

Faculty, students, staff, and others are free to criticize, contest, and condemn views expressed on campus; however, they may not obstruct, disrupt, suppress or otherwise interfere with the freedom of others to express views they reject or even loathe. For members of the NSHE community, a proper response to ideas they find offensive, unwarranted, and dangerous is to engage in robust counter-speech that challenges the merits of those ideas and exposes them for what they are. To this end, NSHE and its institutions have a responsibility not only to promote a lively and fearless freedom of expression and deliberation, but also to protect that freedom when others attempt to restrict it.