



## Know Your Rights: Free Expression at the University of Wyoming

### Your Rights Under the First Amendment

As a student at a **public university**, you have strong **free expression rights** protected by the **First Amendment** to the U.S. Constitution. This means you are free to express your views without fear of punishment or reprisal from the university as long as your expression does not violate the law or university policies that are consistent with constitutional standards.

You have the right to:

- **Speak, write, and advocate** on issues that matter to you.
- **Join or form student organizations** that express shared views or values.
- **Distribute literature, hold signs, and invite speakers** to campus.
- **Engage in peaceful protest and demonstration** in public areas of campus.
- **Express unpopular, minority, or controversial opinions** without being censored by the institution.

### Reasonable Limits

Free expression is not unlimited. The university may enforce **reasonable, content-neutral time, place, and manner rules** to ensure campus safety and the normal operation of classes and activities.

Expression **is not protected** if it involves:

- **A true threat** or harassment that is so **severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive** that it denies others equal access to education.
- **Incitement to imminent violence** or lawless action.
- **Destruction of property** or disruption of university functions.
- **Obscenity** or other narrow categories unprotected by law.

### In the Classroom

Faculty have the right and responsibility to set academic standards.

- You are free to **disagree**, but not to **disrupt** instruction.
- Grading and evaluation are based on **academic merit**, not personal beliefs.

- Academic freedom protects both **students' right to learn** and **faculty members' right to teach** according to disciplinary standards.

## The University's Commitment

The University of Wyoming values **open inquiry, critical thinking, and respectful debate**. The university does not shield students from ideas they may find offensive or disagreeable. Instead, it encourages engagement grounded in reason, evidence, and mutual respect.

## If You Believe Your Rights Have Been Violated

If, for example, you've experienced consequences that you believe to be the result of your participation in campus speech activities, or your speech is restricted or punished even though you think you've followed all the relevant university policies, you can do the following:

- If the setting is your classroom, **talk with your instructor first**. If that does not resolve the issue, talk with the instructor's immediate supervisor (typically, that's the head of their department).
- Review the university's **Statement of Principles on Free Expression, Intellectual Freedom, and Constructive Dialogue** (available at [uwyo.edu/principles](https://www.uwyo.edu/principles)).
- Submit a complaint online through the **Student Complaint Resolution** website: <https://www.uwyo.edu/studentcomplaint/index.html>

**Freedom to think, speak, and listen** is essential to the mission of a public university. What you do with that freedom is up to you.