



Dialogues Across Difference

**Solutions to disruptive speech in the
academic environment**

Theme

Addressing classroom climate, including issues arising from disruptive speech in the learning environment

Disruptive speech includes politically provocative, harassing or hate speech, including display of symbols or objects that adversely affect teaching and learning. Such speech can originate from any scholar – students or faculty – can be inadvertent or intentional, and can arise by commission, collusion, or silence.

Contextualizing Speech -- Learning Environments are Different

- Speech on college campus functions the same in all spaces

- Consequential speech
- Mission of teaching and learning
- Responsibility to create efficacious learning environments
- Importance of Brave Spaces

- Cancel culture
- Censorship



Speech that is legally protected speech can still disrupt teaching and learning.

What then?



MAKE
AMERICA
GREAT AGAIN



Shane N.

A middle space for... **Proactive Approaches**

- File Official Report
- Full investigative and disciplinary response
- Legal ramifications
- Risk management

- Identify patterns
- Listening and offer comfort
- Promote collective awareness
- Receive or offer guidance
- Support systemic/structural solutions
- Enable navigation of conflict through restorative justice

- Do Nothing
- Passive reporting
- Cope as an individual



University of California, Davis

Principles of Community

April 28, 2015

Davis is a diverse community comprised of individuals having many perspectives and identities. We recognize that to create an inclusive differences and our common group commitment

**Affirm and
commit to
non-violent
exchange**



**Confront and
reject
discrimination**



**Build a and maintain
a culture and
climate based on
mutual respect and
caring**



Desired Outcomes

- DEFINE what disruptive speech is, who it affects, and how it impacts the academic environment at UC Davis
- DOCUMENT incidents and experiences with disruptive speech in academic environments
- SUPPORT faculty in handling challenging situations involving disruptive speech
- LEARN more together and develop further solutions
- REFORM UC Davis policies, establish guidelines, and share best practices around addressing disruptive speech

Audience to Address

- Faculty
- graduate students
- other instructional staff





Action #1: Document the Experience

Documenting experiences of faculty and other instructional staff in learning environments that involve disruptive speech:

- (1) What is the problem?
- (2) What is the range of experiences that the faculty/TAs have?
- (3) Recommendations and suggestions for how to deal on campus with disruptive speech and campus climate issues.

Action #1 Steps Forward



- Create a survey to collect case studies
- Administer/distribute survey campus wide
- Collect qualitative data via interviews, oral histories
- Create a composite of stories that are representative of the UC Davis experience (respect confidentiality while still enabling sharing)

Action #2: Share the Experience



Build communities of faculty,
within or across academic units;
generate collective awareness of
instances of disruptive speech in
the learning environment to
share experiences and solutions.



Action #2 Steps Forward



Produce performances of classroom scenes (based on composite stories) that reflect experiences of disruptive speech

- Utilize performance spaces for facilitated peer-to-peer dialogue
- Provide online/hybrid option to make available asynchronously

We will draw upon Theatre of the Oppressed, Theatre in Education, and other community-based performance to perform plays interrupted with moments of facilitated dialogue and audience intervention. Programming developed with a focus on actions and interventions that faculty members can employ.

Action #3:

Establish Support & Guidelines



Establish support and guidelines around disruptive speech in our classrooms and community



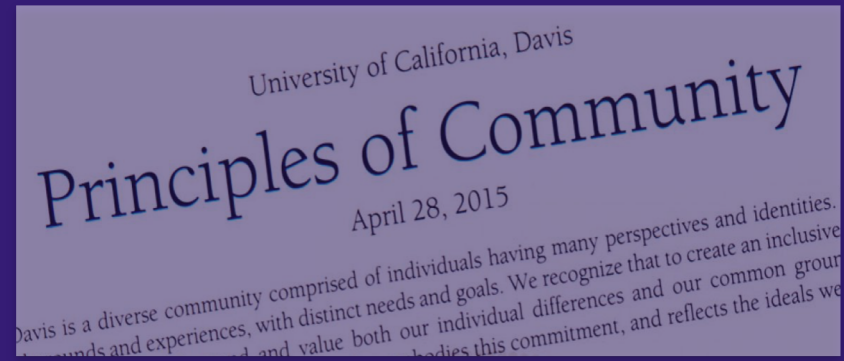
Action #3 Steps Forward



- Support academic departments to develop guidelines around outside speakers, listservs (monitoring and regulating)
- Recognize the need to offer separate spaces or platforms for different types of speech or communications
- Provide guidelines for individual faculty to utilize in their own classrooms (e.g., model language for syllabi)
- Develop methods of assessment that attach professional expectations to respectful dialogue and debate as a measurable skill

Our Actions Align with Campus Goals

- Provide a known and regular means to collect instances of provocative/hate speech/actions on campus
- Provide a practical application of Principles of Community
- Bring clarity to how “free speech” in public places is different from classroom speech. “Just-about-everything-is-permissible” may not be a proper standard for a classroom.



Recommendation for Administrators

(what faculty cannot do alone)

In consultation and partnership with faculty, we recommend that administrators review and update or clarify policies with respect to disruptive speech:

1. Articulate the difference with respect to “free speech” when disruption occurs in a classroom versus designated public spaces
2. Be more intentional and nuanced about “free speech” in academic environments via the Academic Freedom Committee
3. Ensure that accountability incorporates and understands the role of restorative justice practices.
4. Provide resources to support the faculty-led actions recommended here

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“The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education.”

--Martin Luther King

Questions?

“Everything has a price but nothing is costlier than your spoken words in hate and unspoken words in love”

— P.S. Jagadeesh Kumar