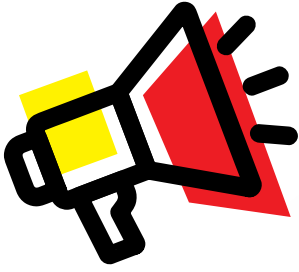


# Fostering and Protecting Free Speech on Campus

The campuses of America's leading research universities are places where students, faculty, staff, and outside speakers practice the free exchange of ideas every day. Schools have a responsibility to foster both free speech and an inclusive and engaging environment free from harassment and violence.

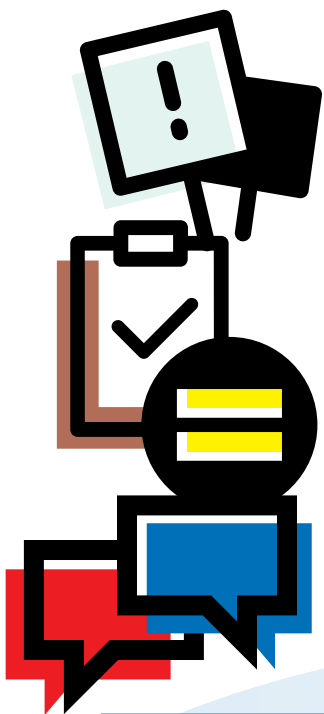


**UNIVERSITIES ARE "NOT ENGAGED IN MAKING IDEAS  
SAFE FOR STUDENTS;" RATHER, THEY ARE  
"ENGAGED IN MAKING STUDENTS SAFE FOR IDEAS."  
CLARK KERR, FORMER UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESIDENT**



**THE FREE AND OPEN EXCHANGE** of ideas and information is fundamental to both the educational mission of AAU universities as well as the success of our broader American society. AAU institutions are unequivocally committed to preserving and honoring this proud heritage.

While some speech may be odious, disgraceful, and antithetical to our values, campuses are and should remain places where ideas can be expressed free of disruption, intimidation, and violence. Universities must simultaneously support First Amendment rights and comply with federal laws such as Title IX and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, which require school officials to remedy harassment that creates a hostile environment. Universities constantly strive to ensure appropriate balance between these duties.



**AAU member universities work to ensure that campus policies on speech, events, dissent, and other protected activities are legally sound, transparent, and readily accessible.** School leaders are also mindful of those circumstances where universities may properly protect their communities from those who seek merely to engender violent conflict through threatening, harassing, or defamatory speech.

**Free speech on campus relies upon audiences listening and offering questions that challenge a speaker's beliefs, assumptions, or illogic.**

In turn, speakers accept questions that aim to explore weaknesses in their arguments. This is essential to civil discourse, learning, the illumination of the truth, and flawed ideas.

**The words of former University of California president Clark Kerr remain true of our mission today: universities are “not engaged in making ideas safe for students;” rather, they are “engaged in making students safe for ideas.”**

**For more information on free speech on campus, read the [AAU Free Speech Statement\\*](#) the leaders of AAU member schools issued in 2018.**

\*[https://www.aau.edu/sites/default/files/AAU-Files/Members-Area/Presidents-Chancellors/FINAL-AAU-Free-Speech-Statemen-\(04-17-18\).PDF.pdf](https://www.aau.edu/sites/default/files/AAU-Files/Members-Area/Presidents-Chancellors/FINAL-AAU-Free-Speech-Statemen-(04-17-18).PDF.pdf)