

Northwestern Oklahoma State University Campus Expression Policy

Oklahoma statute has defined “Campus Community” as NWOSU students, administrators, faculty, staff, and their invited guests.

“Expressive Activity” protected under Oklahoma statute includes but is not limited to the participation of the Campus Community in any lawful verbal, written, audio-visual or electronic means by which individuals may communicate ideas to one another. This could include peaceful assembly, protests, speeches, guest speakers, distribution of literature, carrying signs, and circulating petitions.

Policy Statement

The University will not interfere with the rights of individuals and groups to the free expression of their views or impermissibly regulate their speech based on its content or viewpoint. NWOSU may establish reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions on Expressive Activity. Such restrictions must be content-neutral and allow ample alternative channels for communication of the information. No event or Expressive Activity shall be permitted to substantially disrupt normal University operations.

Oklahoma statute states that the outdoor areas of the NWOSU campus are deemed public forums for the Campus Community. Individuals or organizations not a member of the Campus Community are also invited to use outdoor public forum spaces for the purposes of non-commercial expression. Outdoor areas of campus are the generally accessible outdoor areas where members of the Campus Community are commonly allowed, such as grassy areas, walkways, and common areas. Outdoor areas where access is restricted from the majority of the Campus Community are not included.

The University designates the following indoor facilities as not available for Expressive Activity: administrative offices, laboratories, and (during instructional hours) classrooms. Rooms can only be reconfigured in a limited fashion and the sponsoring organization is responsible for clean-up, damages to property, etc. Restrictions on expressive activities occurring in indoor facilities will apply equally to all individuals and organizations and not depend upon the content or viewpoint of the expression or the possible reaction to that expression.

Time, Place & Manner Restrictions

Expression may be limited or restricted with respect to time, place or manner. These limitations shall be customized (i.e. to ensure the protection of public order, to avoid scheduling two events at the same time, to avoid disruption of functions of the University including its teaching, research, administration, disciplinary proceedings, public-service functions, or other authorized University activity) to assure compliance with local, state and federal laws. Conduct must not be unlawful and does not materially and substantially disrupt the function of the university. Limitations shall be reasonable and applied without regard to the content of the expression or the purpose of the assembly, except for expression that is not protected by the First Amendment.

Examples of such restrictions include imposing limits on the noise level of speech (sound amplification equipment is prohibited), capping the number of participants who occupy any given space, and protecting the safety of individuals, campus property and the continuity of the educational process. The carrying of torches or open flames, wearing helmets, carrying shields or bats, and wearing masks is prohibited, per [Oklahoma statute \(21 O.S. 1301\)](#).

Procedures

Reserving Indoor Campus Facilities

Members of the Campus Community must submit a Facility and Event Registration Form. Reservations should be given at least twenty-four (24) hours advance notice, as defined by the calendar of administrative office days. If the event is to be scheduled on a Monday, notice shall be given no later than the preceding Friday. More notice may be required to allow for sufficient logistical support and to ensure the safety and security of the campus or if the requested location is already scheduled for use by another party.

Individuals or organizations who are not members of the Campus Community must notify the Dean of Student Affairs and/or the respective Campus Dean. Such individuals or organizations must submit the Facility and Event Registration Form if they wish to reserve an indoor facility, giving at least twenty-four (24) hours advance notice.

Requests to reserve campus facilities are on a first-come, first-served basis, provided, Campus Community members will have priority when reserving campus facilities. These requests may be denied for the following reasons:

- a. The requested venue is an indoor facility that the University has designated as not available for Expressive Activity;
- b. The requested venue is an outdoor area where access is restricted from the majority of the Campus Community;
- c. The venue is already reserved for another event;
- d. The activity will attract a crowd larger than the venue can safely contain;
- e. The activity will substantially disrupt another event being held at a neighboring venue;
- f. The activity will substantially disrupt University operations (including classes);
- g. The activity is a clear and present threat to public safety, as determined by the University's police department;
- h. The activity will occur during examination periods; or
- i. The activity is unlawful or unprotected.

Outdoor Expressive Activity

It is recommended by the University for the Campus Community and the public to contact the Dean of Student Affairs and/or the respective Campus Dean if there is a planned Expressive Activity to be held on outdoor areas, so that any questions regarding safety and/or set-up may be discussed.

For outdoor campus facilities and areas, the Campus Community and the public may freely engage in spontaneous expressive activities as long as they do not block access to campus buildings, obstruct vehicular or pedestrian traffic, substantially disrupt previously scheduled campus events, substantially disrupt University operations, constitute unlawful activity, or create a clear and present threat to public safety, according to the University's police department.

No University personnel may impose restrictions on the Campus Community and the public who are engaging in spontaneous Expressive Activities due to the content or viewpoint of their expression or the possible reaction to that expression. In the event that other persons react negatively to these activities, University officials (including Campus Police) shall take all necessary steps to ensure public safety while allowing the Expressive Activity to continue.

Appendix 20-21

Expressive Activities in groups will be held to the social distancing standards and face covering requirements, as listed in the University policy, during the pandemic.