

## Resolution on Academic Freedom, Free Expression, and Social Media Support and Resources for JMU Faculty

Whereas, JMU's primary mission, and *raison d'être*, is its **academic mission**.

Whereas, **academic freedom**, the lifeblood of American higher education, protects the independence of faculty members in their pursuit of expert knowledge and in their transmission of this knowledge to students.

Whereas, academic freedom insulates research and teaching from public pressure.

Whereas, the academic mission of the university can be served only if academic freedom for faculty members in teaching and research is vigorously defended.

Whereas, the targeting of scholars for their ideas or views may not only threaten harm to those individuals, but also strikes at the University's academic core

Whereas, the university administration must publicly defend the academic freedom rights of faculty when those rights are attacked -- *especially* with regard to research and teaching about controversial issues or ideas that may provoke disagreement in the public.

Whereas, **freedom of speech** is a constitutionally-protected right possessed by each individual American citizen, including university faculty, and is necessary for the robust intellectual exchange on which the University's teaching and research missions depend.

Whereas, when administrators fail in their obligation to whole-heartedly support the constitutionally protected free expression rights of faculty, the university's research and teaching mission is made vulnerable to political pressure.

Whereas, the university administration must publicly defend the constitutionally protected speech of faculty when faculty are targeted for their views or opinions -- *especially* with regard to controversial issues or ideas that may provoke disagreement in the public.

Whereas, when administrators fail in their obligation to whole-heartedly support the free expression rights of faculty, the academic freedom of faculty is endangered, and the university's research and teaching mission is made vulnerable to political pressure.

Whereas speech, teaching, research and expression that is civil but not free is empty, and is incompatible with the academic mission of the university.

Whereas speech, teaching, research, and expression that is free and not civil is compatible with the academic mission of the university.

Whereas when the university administration's calls for civility drown out or qualify defenses of free speech and academic freedom, faculty are undermined rather than protected, and the academic mission of the university is compromised.

Be it therefore resolved that when faculty are attacked on social media for expressing their political views, the JMU administration should defend free speech and note its close connection to academic freedom, the importance of faculty safety, and the development of learning environments in which difficult issues are discussed and dissected.

Be it further resolved that the University must, through its official policies and its public utterances, offer resources and support for faculty against the intimidation, harassment or injury that public discourse and the expression – civil or uncivil -- of unpopular ideas may generate.

Be it further resolved that JMU will immediately adopt a "Faculty Support Safety Guidance" document based on the document of that name developed by the University of Iowa and modified for use at Penn State. Links:

Penn State: *Social Media Support and Resources for Penn State Faculty* document:

[https://sites.psu.edu/academicaffairs/files/2020/09/Social-Media-Support-and-Resources-for-Penn-State-Faculty\\_09-17-20.pdf](https://sites.psu.edu/academicaffairs/files/2020/09/Social-Media-Support-and-Resources-for-Penn-State-Faculty_09-17-20.pdf)

University of Iowa: *Faculty Support & Safety Guidance* document:

[https://www.provost.uiowa.edu/sites/provost.uiowa.edu/files/Faculty\\_Support\\_Safety\\_Guidance.pdf](https://www.provost.uiowa.edu/sites/provost.uiowa.edu/files/Faculty_Support_Safety_Guidance.pdf)

Note: a lot of this language is from the Penn State document, which is itself based closely on the University of Iowa document. See links.