

Allegany College of Maryland
STUDENT & LEGAL AFFAIRS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FIRST AMENDMENT POLICIES:

FREE SPEECH & EXPRESSION * RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

OVERVIEW:

Allegany College of Maryland honors the United States Constitution and recognizes its responsibility as a public institution to protect the rights articulated in the First Amendment: freedom of speech, religion, assembly and association within the context of its educational mission and without preferential treatment. The College has 2 companion policies. The original Free Speech & Expression Policy is designed to provide broad constitutional protections under the First Amendment but with emphasis on protected speech and expression. The newer Religious Freedom Policy codifies both some fundamental protections extended to religion under the constitution and mandates under Maryland law enacted in 2023. This Executive Summary highlights the basics of each policy in practice.

FREE SPEECH & EXPRESSION POLICY / KEY PRINCIPLES:

- 1) Applies to all persons on all college owned/managed property.
- 2) Protects the rights of persons lawfully on campus to engage in constitutionally protected speech or expressive activity regardless of the content/viewpoint of the words, materials, symbols, etc.
- 3) Examples include speeches in the public square, demonstrations, rallies, vigils, distribution of literature/pamphlets, collecting signatures on petitions, art, performance art, chalking, symbolism of protected expressive activity, funding of student clubs/organizations, and campaigning for public office. (Academic freedom is also preserved by this policy.)
- 4) Reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions apply.
- 5) Unprotected speech such as threats, “fighting words” designed to incite a breach of peace or violence, defamation, and obscenity are not protected in accordance with constitutional law.
- 6) Planned events must be sponsored by a College employee or College group, and an event request form must be submitted to the Dean of Student & Legal Affairs. Spontaneous events are permitted. Facility rental fees *may* be required.
- 7) No person may be compelled to participate in any activity.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM POLICY / KEY PRINCIPLES:

- 1) Applies to all persons on all college owned/managed property.
- 2) Protects the rights of persons lawfully on campus to engage in constitutionally protected religious activity regardless of the content/viewpoint of the religion or faith-based belief.
- 3) Examples include: individual prayer; group prayer, carrying/citing religious materials such as books/treatises/liturgy, dietary restriction, restricted activity based upon the day of the week and/or time of day, holiday observances, artwork/décor of personal spaces, and *wearing religious symbols or messages in attire, jewelry, body art, and head coverings.*
Free Speech & Expression Policy also applies to these acts.
- 4) Reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions apply.
- 5) The College will provide dedicated space on the main Cumberland, Maryland campus for individual students and employees to engage in protected religious activity.
Protected activity does not extend to organized religious/faith-based groups who want to hold services; for those groups, facility rental is required.
- 6) When requested, the College will provide reasonable religious accommodations for individual students and employees. Accommodations for students include excused absences for religious holidays/observances and alternative academic requirements for such absences.
- 7) No person may be compelled to participate in any activity.

QUESTIONS / CONTACT

Complete policies may be found at <https://www.allegany.edu/student-and-legal-affairs/index.html> . If you have any questions or concerns, contact Dr. Renee Conner in CC-12, by email at rconner@allegany.edu , or by phone at (301) 784-5206.
