



Philosophy on Institutional, Informational and Individual Communications

The University of Northern Colorado's Philosophy on Institutional, Informational and Individual statements uses the university's [Mission and Values](#) and the [University of Chicago's Kalven Report](#) as guiding principles.

In the spirit of upholding UNC's commitment to nurture and celebrate all aspects of diversity within our community, the university will maintain a position of institutional restraint in issuing public statements on complex social, political or policy issues, natural disasters or tragedies that extend beyond the core operations of the university.

When an institution takes sides on these types of issues, even when the majority may be in agreement, there is a risk of silencing or unknowingly harming others in our community who do not share similar opinions, beliefs or experiences.

The absence of an institutional position allows for diversity of thought from all members of our community and helps us maintain an environment that encourages respectful, meaningful discussion and learning from those different experiences, viewpoints and ideas.

Considerations for communicating university public position statements:

University leaders (to include the president, vice presidents, deans, department chairs, directors and others who if communicating in their official capacity are likely to be perceived as speaking on behalf of the institution or one of its units) will generally refrain from issuing institutional public position statements about complex social, political or policy issues, natural disasters or tragedies, unless the matter:

1. Significantly impacts the health and safety of the university community and/or campus operations.
2. Directly affects the core operations of the university, such as the functions of teaching, research and learning or is counter to the university's strategic plans and priorities and/or core values.
3. Is of importance to the city, region or state and the university can play a vital role in sharing information with the public.

Except for the circumstances listed above, UNC will not take a position on partisan political issues or directly criticize court decisions, or arms of state, federal or international governments, and will not promote, endorse or oppose specific candidates for elected government positions.

These guidelines apply to all units within the University of Northern Colorado, including colleges, schools, departments, divisions, centers, institutes and programs. It also applies to any

university employee seeking to issue a public position statement on behalf of the university in their capacity as an employee.

School/College/Department public position statements

When a matter of public controversy or concern relates to the core mission or operations of a particular campus unit (e.g., school, college, department), rather than the university as a whole, then an institutional position statement at the level of that unit (e.g., dean, institute director, department chair) may on rare occasions be considered.

In such instances, the university leader of that unit (e.g. dean, department chair) must consult with AVP for Communications in advance, and such statements are subject to the approval of the president or their designee.

Considerations for releasing informational statements

In some situations, it may be necessary to issue an informational statement on a matter of public controversy or concern to provide facts about a situation and/or information about resources. In these instances, the statement should maintain institutional neutrality regarding events or controversies that affect community members.

Statements that are informational in nature, especially about distressing or illegal events that occur on or near our campus, may at times state or reinforce basic institutional values and legal obligations (such as our commitment to diversity of thought and culture) without violating this policy.

The AVP for Communications should be given advance notice and the opportunity to review such messages to ensure it aligns with this philosophy.

Considerations for releasing individual statements

These guidelines do not apply to UNC faculty, staff or students making statements as private citizens or as individual scholars. In fact, as the Kalven Report recognized, "the appropriate instrument of dissent and criticism is the individual faculty member or the individual student," not the university.

However, at no time should individual statements purport to represent the university or an institutional unit, unless explicitly authorized by the president or designee, regardless of whether such statements reflect academic expertise or individuals' rights to free expression as private citizens.

This philosophy preserves freedom of expression, an individual's First Amendment rights and academic freedom with respect to teaching, scholarly and artistic activities and the dissemination of the results of those activities as described in Board Policy 2-3-601.

Providing clarification when making individual public statements

Depending on the nature of an individual's position on campus, the distinction between personal and institutional role may not always be apparent. University employees at all levels should be clear about when they are speaking personally, when they are speaking as an expert on a particular subject or when they are speaking in their institutional role; especially in instances where there might be confusion on the question.

Kalven Committee: Report on the University's Role in Political and Social Action

Report of a faculty committee, under the chairmanship of Harry Kalven, Jr. Committee appointed by President George W. Beadle. Report published in the Record, Vol. I, No. 1, November 11, 1967.

The Committee was appointed in February 1967 by President George W. Beadle and requested to prepare "a statement on the University's role in political and social action." The Committee conceives its function as principally that of providing a point of departure for discussion in the University community of this important question.

The Committee has reviewed the experience of the University in such matters as its participation in neighborhood redevelopment, its defense of academic freedom in the Broyles Bill inquiry of the 1940s and again in the Jenner Committee hearings of the early 1950s, its opposition to the Disclaimer Affidavit in the National Defense Education Act of 1958, its reappraisal of the criteria by which it rents the off-campus housing it owns, and its position on furnishing the rank of male students to Selective Service. In its own discussions, the Committee has found a deep consensus on the appropriate role of the university in political and social action. It senses some popular misconceptions about that role and wishes, therefore, simply to reaffirm a few old truths and a cherished tradition.

A university has a great and unique role to play in fostering the development of social and political values in a society. The role is defined by the distinctive mission of the university and defined too by the distinctive characteristics of the university as a community. It is a role for the long term.

The mission of the university is the discovery, improvement, and dissemination of knowledge. Its domain of inquiry and scrutiny includes all aspects and all values of society. A university faithful to its mission will provide enduring challenges to social values, policies, practices, and institutions. By design and by effect, it is the institution which creates discontent with the existing social arrangements and proposes new ones. In brief, a good university, like Socrates, will be upsetting.

The instrument of dissent and criticism is the individual faculty member or the individual student. The university is the home and sponsor of critics; it is not itself the critic. It is, to go back once again to the classic phrase, a community of scholars. To perform its mission in the society, a university must sustain an extraordinary environment of freedom of inquiry and maintain an independence from political fashions, passions, and pressures. A university, if it is to be true to its faith in intellectual inquiry, must embrace, be hospitable to, and encourage the widest diversity of views within its own community. It is a community but only for the limited, albeit great, purposes of teaching and research. It is not a club, it is not a trade association, it is not a lobby.

Since the university is a community only for these limited and distinctive purposes, it is a community which cannot take collective action on the issues of the day without endangering the conditions for its existence and effectiveness. There is no mechanism by which it can reach a collective position without inhibiting that full freedom of dissent on which it thrives. It cannot insist that all of its members favor a given view of social policy; if it takes collective action, therefore, it does so at the price of censuring any minority who do not agree with the view adopted. In brief, it is a community which cannot resort to majority vote to reach positions on public issues.

The neutrality of the university as an institution arises then not from a lack of courage nor out of indifference and insensitivity. It arises out of respect for free inquiry and the obligation to cherish a diversity of viewpoints. And this neutrality as an institution has its complement in the fullest freedom for its faculty and students as individuals to participate in political action and social protest. It finds its complement, too, in the obligation of the university to provide a forum for the most searching and candid discussion of public issues.

Moreover, the sources of power of a great university should not be misconceived. Its prestige and influence are based on integrity and intellectual competence; they are not based on the circumstance that it may be wealthy, may have political contacts, and may have influential friends.

From time to time instances will arise in which the society, or segments of it, threaten the very mission of the university and its values of free inquiry. In such a crisis, it becomes the obligation of the university as an institution to oppose such measures and actively to defend its interests and its values. There is another context in which questions as to the appropriate role of the university may possibly arise, situations involving university ownership of property, its receipt of funds, its awarding of honors, its membership in other organizations. Here, of necessity, the university, however it acts, must act as an institution in its corporate capacity. In the exceptional instance, these corporate activities of the university may appear so incompatible with paramount social values as to require careful assessment of the consequences.

These extraordinary instances apart, there emerges, as we see it, a heavy presumption against the university taking collective action or expressing opinions on the political and social issues of the day, or modifying its corporate activities to foster social or political values, however compelling and appealing they may be.

These are admittedly matters of large principle, and the application of principle to an individual case will not be easy.

It must always be appropriate, therefore, for faculty or students or administration to question, through existing channels such as the Committee of the Council or the Council, whether in light of these principles the University in particular circumstances is playing its proper role.

Our basic conviction is that a great university can perform greatly for the betterment of society. It should not, therefore, permit itself to be diverted from its mission into playing the role of a second-rate political force or influence.

Harry Kalven, Jr., *Chairman*

John Hope Franklin

Gwin J. Kolb

George Stigler

Jacob Getzels

Julian Goldsmith

Gilbert F. White

Special Comment by Mr. Stigler:

I agree with the report as drafted, except for the statements in the fifth paragraph from the end as to the role of the university when it is acting in its corporate capacity. As to this matter, I would prefer the statement in the following form:

The university when it acts in its corporate capacity as employer and property owner should, of course, conduct its affairs with honor. The university should not use these corporate activities to foster any moral or political values because such use of its facilities will impair its integrity as the home of intellectual freedom.