

## **Public Forums, Demonstrations,**

### **Marches and Protests**

The university experience exposes individuals to the vast world of ideas and debate. In fact, an essential definition of education is the fostering of intellectual growth through the encouragement of free inquiry and speech. You come to college not only to prepare for a profession, but to learn about the world. To be able to do that, this university understands that your individual right to respect, dignity, a set of personal beliefs, and the opportunity to pursue your education and daily life without the willful disruption by others must be paramount and guaranteed.

When issues arise that in your view beg for public exposure, the key to having your say and getting heard is facilitating the opening of minds. WestConn has a complete set of guidelines concerning public forums. You should review them before considering being part of a demonstration.

### **Preamble**

Western Connecticut State University is committed to providing an educational community that disseminates knowledge by means of teaching, research and service. To fulfill these functions, a free exchange of ideas is encouraged both within its walls and between the university and the outside world. WestConn is committed to doing everything possible to insure the greatest degree of intellectual freedom. These rights apply to all members of the WestConn community. Few institutions in our society have this same vital purpose; accordingly, few assign such high priority to the freedom of expression.

Western Connecticut State University is committed to maintaining an environment where the free expression of ideas and open, vigorous debate and speech can occur. Every member of the campus community has an obligation to promote and respect free expression in the university. No member shall prevent such expression.

As a member of this academic community your rights as a citizen are neither increased nor lessened by your status as a member of the university community. However, you do have added responsibilities. These added responsibilities include the exercise of civility and honesty and a respect for the dignity, diversity, equality and freedom of others.

The university also has the equal and simultaneous obligation to protect the rights and freedoms of protestors and also the rights of those who choose not to participate in a given protest or demonstration. The university has an obligation to protect its property and to assure continuation of the activities of students, faculty, staff and guests on campus.

The following guidelines are in accordance with the CSU Board of Trustees' Policy Resolution on Campus Freedom and Order, dated August 7, 1970.

### **Guidelines for Public Forums and Events**

The guidelines, which apply to all public forums and events at Western Connecticut State University, are intended to protect the right of free expression and the safety and integrity of the forum in which this right is exercised.

### **Right to Dissent**

The right to dissent is the complement of the right to speak, but a speaker is entitled to communicate a message to the audience during an allotted time, and the audience is entitled to hear the message and see the speaker during that time.

1. These guidelines shall apply to all members and guests of the university community and to all events taking place on property owned or under control of Western Connecticut State University.
2. Demonstrations shall also include marches and protests.

### **Force or Violence**

Using force or violence or threatening imminent physical force or violence is prohibited.

### **The Audience's Responsibility**

The audience, like the host and the speaker, must respect the right to dissent.

### **Guidelines for Demonstrations**

A broad range of speech will be tolerated at Western Connecticut State University, subject to consideration of the health, welfare, and safety of all students, faculty, staff and guests and the functioning of the university.

Demonstrations may be held anywhere on campus so long as they do not unreasonably disrupt the normal operation of the university or infringe on the rights of other members of the university community.

Demonstrators shall not physically interfere with the operation of the university or the rights of others. Such actions include, but are not limited to;

- Physically obstructing or disrupting teaching, research, or administration
- Interfering with the safe operation of the residence halls
- Causing or threatening to cause, injury or harm to persons or property
- Obstructing vehicular, pedestrian or other traffic lanes
- Obstructing entrances or exits to buildings
- Interfering with educational, residential, theatrical performance or co-curricular activities inside or outside any building
- Precluding a scheduled speaker from being heard
- Damaging property, including lawns, shrubs or trees
- Failing to comply with reasonable orders or directives of university officials, police, or any other law enforcement officers acting within the scope of their duties.

The university may place reasonable restraints on demonstrations with regard to time, place, and manner to protect property and person and to maintain the orderly conduct of the university.

To secure assistance in planning and obtaining university facilities, to ensure that other activities are not adversely affected, and to protect the rights of all members of the university community, sponsors of demonstrations or marches are encouraged to meet with the vice president of student affairs and/or the director of Student Center/Student Life, together with the associate vice president for Public Safety, or designee, to discuss the details of the demonstration and/or march. During this meeting the vice president for student affairs or designee shall discuss with the organizers of the demonstration or protest the parameters of the demonstration. This will include issues of time, place, manner, including sound amplification, and arrangements for proper security to insure the rights of all members of the university community.

### **Violations of Guidelines**

If, in the opinion of the university president or his/her designee, there has been a violation of these guidelines amounting to a disruption of normal university operations or infringing on the rights of other members of the university community, the president or designee may:

- (a) Identify him/herself to the demonstrators, giving name and official position
- (b) Inform the demonstrators of the specific university policy they are violating
- (c) Request that the violation cease; and
- (d) In the event of non-compliance with this request, enlist the assistance of the University Police in restoring order

The University Police have a responsibility to:

- (a) Inform the demonstrators of the specific university policy and/or existing state statute they are violating and inform the demonstrators that they must clear the area or be subject to arrest and/or university disciplinary action
- (b) Arrest any demonstrators observed to be in violation of the law and
- (c) Enlist the assistance of outside law enforcement agencies, if necessary.