

**DATE:** Thursday, Nov. 2, 2023

**SUBJECT:** Our unwavering commitment to free speech and academic freedom

Dear colleagues and students:

The University of Texas at Arlington is committed to free speech and open inquiry. Our University fully supports the principles of academic freedom that enable faculty and students to pursue scholarly inquiry and teaching without undue restriction or influence. These are fundamental rights and central to the mission of our University.

I feel compelled to share these core beliefs—[and our University policy on free speech, expression, and assembly](#)—because recent actions around the country, and even on our campus, have provided cause for some to question higher education’s commitment to these principles. Every day, I learn of institutions that have succumbed to extreme polarization or a refusal to truly listen to other viewpoints.

One of UTA’s institutional responsibilities is to provide opportunities for civil discourse, regardless of how controversial, uncomfortable, or emotional a topic may be. Even when we disagree, neither I nor the University will tolerate unacceptable behavior that shuts down free speech. I cannot condone or support such tactics from our community and our code of conduct prohibits it.

If any recent characterizations or events made unclear our institution’s stance on free speech or academic freedom, I am here to unequivocally reaffirm our unwavering commitment to these vital principles. UTA has no unlawful restrictions on free speech, or the topic or content of events, now or in the future. Nor are there new requirements for events on campus.

This is who we are, what we expect of ourselves, and who we strive to be. As your president, I remain confident in our ability to engage in discourse—and with one another—with civility and respect.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Cowley, Ph.D.  
UTA President