



Policy Number: I.38  
Policy Level: Operating Policy  
Originally Issued: August 12, 2024  
Policy Owner: President  
Policy Implementation: Vice Presidents

# CAMPUS USE AND PROTECTION OF FREE SPEECH

## I. Policy Statement and Purpose

Athens State University property and facilities are devoted to and maintained for the purpose of fulfilling the university's mission and to provide a safe environment for use and enjoyment of the campus community. As such, university property and facilities are not places of unrestricted or unregulated public access and speech.

The purpose of this policy is to promote and facilitate free expression while allowing Athens State University to ensure that such activities do not interfere with the university's mission and operations.

By this policy, the University exercises the right to properly manage access to and the use of its property in such a way to protect students, faculty, staff and persons lawfully on or using University facilities and to preserve and protect University assets.

The University will enforce time, place, and manner restrictions that are viewpoint and content neutral to ensure that interests are protected and that expression does not disrupt the ordinary activities of the institution.

This policy applies to university students, employees, and invited guests of student organizations or employees. Demonstrations by invited guests must be supervised or managed on-site by the sponsoring University unit, group, or individual. Visitors who are not students, employees, or invited guests are not permitted to engage in Demonstrations on the University Campus/Space.

This policy does not apply to Athens State University's official use of its spaces for university programs and activities.

## II. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply.

**Demonstration** – a form of public expression by one or more persons that includes public speech-making or other verbal communication, protesting, marching, peaceful assembly, carrying signs, circulating petitions, or distributing literature.

**University Campus/Space** – includes **all** property owned, leased, or controlled by the University and any affiliated foundation including buildings and outdoor premises, such as parking lots, and other outdoor property.



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### III. General Provisions

The University is committed to providing a safe environment for employees, students and visitors therefore, due to safety concerns, all generally accessible outdoor areas of the University campus/space where members of the campus community are commonly allowed are open for demonstrations except for the following:

1. Areas within 50 feet of buildings
2. Roadways and parking lots commonly used by automobiles

Demonstrations may not occur in indoor University campus/spaces.

The following limitations/requirements apply to ALL demonstrations:

- No amplified sound devices, including microphones, speakers, and bullhorns, may be used in connection with demonstrations anywhere on campus, without the advance, prior permission of the University (requested at least 10 days in advance of the demonstration), who shall review such application to determine whether the amplified sound would disrupt or interfere with university activities.
- Demonstrations may not occur in any University campus/space between 10PM and sunrise.
- Individuals may not block or interfere with the free flow of traffic (vehicular and/or pedestrian). Right of way on streets and sidewalks must be maintained.
- Individuals may not prevent, obstruct, or interfere with regular academic and administrative activities.
- Individuals may not block or interfere with ingress and egress into and out of campus buildings.
- Individuals may not disrupt, interfere with, or attempt to force the cancellation of any event or activity sponsored by the University or by any individual/group authorized to use University space.
- Individuals shall not engage in any verbally or physically abusive, coercive, or threatening conduct toward any person or group. This includes any attempt to intimidate or badger a person into viewing, listening to, or accepting a copy of communication, or persistently requesting or demanding the attention of a person after that person has attempted to walk away or has clearly refused to attend to the speaker's communication.
- Individuals may not erect structures, barricades, fences, or other improvements.
- Camping, overnight sleeping and similar overnight uses of outdoor spaces are prohibited.
- Chalking is prohibited



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#### **IV. Sanctions and Enforcement**

Safety extends to protect the rights of participants and non-participants alike in situations involving protests or campus unrest, therefore, any individual violating university policies including those contained in this document will be subject to immediate removal from the campus grounds, without prior warning, by appropriate university agents or officials and may be subject to appropriate legal action. University students, student organizations, and employees who violate this policy will be subject to disciplinary action according to university policies and procedures.

#### **V. Responsibility for this Operating Policy**

##### **Policy Owner**

As part of the initial approval of this policy by the President and subsequent to the original dissemination of the policy, the President will be the policy owner for the ongoing evaluation, review, and approval of this policy. Subsequent reviews and revisions to this policy must be in accordance with approved operating policy procedures and processes.

This policy will be reviewed every two years or more frequently as needed by the Policy Owner. Revisions will be reviewed/affirmed by the Cabinet and approved by the University President. This policy will be updated/published in the University's Policy Library.

##### **Responsibility for Policy Implementation**

The President has assigned the responsibility of implementing this policy to the Vice Presidents and the Chief Human Resources Officer.