



**Approving University Official:** Provost  
**Responsible Offices:** Provost, Student Affairs, Human Resources  
**Effective date:** August 20, 2020  
**Next review date:** August 2023

## DEMONSTRATION POLICY

### Policy Statement

This Policy addresses the parameters for free expression and peaceful demonstration by members of the Northwestern community, including faculty, students, staff, and invited guests. For purposes of this Policy, the term *demonstration* has the meaning stated in “Definitions” below.

### Purpose

Northwestern welcomes the expression of ideas, including viewpoints that may be considered unorthodox or unpopular. The University encourages freedom of speech, freedom of inquiry, freedom of dissent, and freedom to demonstrate in a peaceful fashion. Regardless of their own views, community members share a corresponding responsibility to welcome and promote this freedom for all. They also share a responsibility to maintain an atmosphere conducive to scholarly, creative, and educational pursuits and to respect the safety and rights of all individuals. In order to promote these interests and to ensure the safe and effective operation of University business, this Policy establishes the parameters community members are expected to adhere to when engaging in free expression and peaceful demonstration.

### Audience

All members of the Northwestern community, including faculty, students, staff, and invited guests.

### Definitions

*Community member:* any member of the Northwestern community, including but not limited to faculty, students, staff, and invited guests.

*Demonstration:* for purposes of this Policy, any public display of individual or group speech or other expression occurring either (i) on or near the Northwestern campus or (ii) at University-sponsored events off campus. Examples of demonstrations may include but are not limited to assemblies, picketing, protests, counter-protests, or sit-ins.

## Policy Implementation

### I. *General Guidelines*

To allow for freedom of expression and peaceful demonstration on campus while also respecting the University's operations, the following guidelines for demonstration are in place:

- A. *Rights of others.* No community member may prevent or obstruct (or attempt to prevent or obstruct) the speech or other expression of another community member, except that Northwestern Police or other University officials may act consistent with this Policy to ensure the speech or other expression of community members is consistent with the guidelines in this Policy.

Similarly, no community member may deprive (or attempt to deprive) others of participation in a University activity, threaten use of force against any community member, or otherwise interfere with the function of others within the University.

- B. *University operations.* No community member may prevent or obstruct (or attempt to prevent or obstruct) (i) the regularly scheduled activities of the University, such as classes, research, learning, meetings, interviews, ceremonies, emergency services, or University business; (ii) co-curricular activities; (iii) University or public events; or (iv) medical center access or business. Similarly, no community member may use or occupy campus facilities so as to impede the carrying forward of such activities or events.

Groups may occupy space but not in a manner that blocks movement around the campus (including but not limited to entrance to or egress from any campus building, campus facility, or University-owned and -maintained roadway or pathway) unless authorized by a University official.

- C. *Research areas.* Demonstrations cannot take place in research areas where the presence of participants would compromise individual safety or violate laws, regulations, or Northwestern policies relating to research safety.
- D. *Signs.* Placards, banners, and signs may not obstruct the view of those assembled or endanger other community members.
- E. *Police and other officials.* The role of Northwestern Police during a demonstration is to maximize the safety and security of community members as well as University property. When enforcing this Policy, other Northwestern policies, or applicable law, Northwestern Police or other University officials may request community members to identify themselves and/or instruct community members to remove placards, banners, or signs or to leave a University location. When possible participants will first be given a warning to leave or remove placards, banners, or signs, unless a life safety issue prevents that step. Community members are expected to follow these requests.
- F. *Facilities.* All events are subject to the requirements and limitations of the event's location, including [room occupancy](#). All events must comply with applicable building safety codes.
- G. *Other laws and policies.* Participants in demonstrations or protests are subject to other Northwestern policies, city ordinances, and state and federal law in addition to this Policy.

## II. *Event Notification and Other Advance Arrangements*

- A. *Student events.* To facilitate advance planning of an event and to help protect the community, students and/or student groups are encouraged to notify [Student Organizations and Activities](#) in advance of any demonstration (see “Contacts” below for additional information and [FAQs](#) created in support of student events.). Notification should be submitted at least 48 hours before the start of the event. Whenever possible, students and/or student groups should give additional advance notice, ideally two weeks or more, to best facilitate planning. Student Organizations and Activities are not authorized to deny these events.

However, when conducting such events, student organizers are expected to promote a safe environment and, to the best of their ability, ensure participants adhere to the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

- B. *Event Support Team (EST).* Once notified of a planned demonstration, typically involving students, the University will convene the EST, which provides on-site support to assist with management of the event. The EST will actively attempt to preserve open discourse surrounding and during the event.
- C. *Resources for risk assessment.* Occasionally an invited speaker or event will raise a credible likelihood (based on prior incidents or communications of intent) that the speaker or event may prompt a demonstration or become the target of threats or violence. In these circumstances, community members planning an event are encouraged to notify [Student Organizations and Activities](#) and/or [Northwestern Police](#) as soon as is feasible to consult and conduct a risk assessment (see “Contacts” below for additional information).
- D. *Reserving space.* Community members are expected to follow applicable guidelines for seeking permission to use University space to conduct demonstrations. All outdoor events and activities are subject to the requirements outlined in Northwestern’s [Outdoor Event Request Portal](#).
- E. *Security.* Community members planning an event may need police presence or security, especially if there is a possibility of protest or dissent. Northwestern Police will assess and determine the safety and security needs for the event. Their assessment may result in the presence of police officers, security officers, and processes such as bag-check, event ticketing, and other steps to maximize the safety of attendees and the broader community.
- F. *Media.* Faculty or staff planning to invite journalists other than Northwestern student journalists to cover an event should contact [Global Marketing and Communications](#) in advance of the event.

## III. *Counter Demonstration*

A protest, demonstration, or event on campus may cause further dissent, resulting in a counter demonstration. The guidelines in this Policy also apply to counter demonstrations. When such an occasion arises, it is the responsibility of the University as well as all involved to allow for freedom of expression from all individuals. University officers may designate a separate area for counter demonstrations.

## **Consequences of Violating this Policy**

If faculty, staff, students, or student organizations are suspected of violating this Policy, the matter will be referred to the appropriate office or department for follow up under University policies and procedures (including the handbook procedures referenced in “Related Information” below).

There is no typical sanction associated with violations of this Policy. Each case is context specific; in determining whether a sanction is warranted, considerations include the severity of the violation of this and any other relevant policies as well as any prior misconduct.

## **Related Information**

[Faculty Handbook](#)

[Global Marketing and Communications](#)

[Northwestern Outdoor Event Request Portal](#)

[Northwestern Police Special Event Security Request](#)

[Staff Handbook](#)

[Student Code of Conduct](#)

[Student Handbook](#)

[Student Organizations and Activities home page](#)

[Demonstration Policy Frequently Asked Questions](#)

## **Contacts**

The following individuals or offices can address questions regarding this Policy:

For faculty issues: Associate Provost for Faculty, at (847) 491-7040 or [assoc-prov-faculty@northwestern.edu](mailto:assoc-prov-faculty@northwestern.edu).

For student issues: Associate Vice President and Dean of Students, at (847) 491-8430 or [dos@northwestern.edu](mailto:dos@northwestern.edu);

Student Organizations and Activities (third floor Norris University Center), at (847) 491-2350 or [studentorgs@northwestern.edu](mailto:studentorgs@northwestern.edu); or

Associated Student Government (ASG) President, at [asg-president@u.northwestern.edu](mailto:asg-president@u.northwestern.edu), ASG Executive Vice President, at [asg-vp@u.northwestern.edu](mailto:asg-vp@u.northwestern.edu), or ASG Vice President of Student Activities and Resources, at [asg-savp@u.northwestern.edu](mailto:asg-savp@u.northwestern.edu).

For staff issues, contact Human Resources, at (847) 491-7507 or [hrmis@northwestern.edu](mailto:hrmis@northwestern.edu).

To notify the University of a student demonstration or similar event, contact Student Organizations and Activities (third floor Norris University Center), at (847) 491-2350 or [studentorgs@northwestern.edu](mailto:studentorgs@northwestern.edu).

For questions about arranging police presence or security for an event, contact Northwestern University Police at (847) 491-3456 or [upevents@northwestern.edu](mailto:upevents@northwestern.edu).

For questions about media presence at an event, contact Global Marketing and Communications, at (847) 491-5001 or [global-marketing@northwestern.edu](mailto:global-marketing@northwestern.edu).

## **History**

Supersedes University Disruption and Demonstration Policy, which originated before 1980 and was revised in 2017.

## **Policy URL:**

<https://policies.northwestern.edu/docs/demonstration-policy-final.pdf>