

ADELPHI

UNIVERSITY

Common questions around campus protests and free speech and a guide to some helpful answers about the University's policies

Why do people hold demonstrations?

Demonstrations are a means where like-minded individuals stand together to raise awareness about pressing social, racial and global issues. Demonstrations offer opportunities to create a sense of community and work to bring about change. As a university, we have had a long tradition of civic engagement both on campus and as part of national movements and causes.

Are demonstrations allowed at Adelphi?

Yes, peaceful, nonobstructive demonstrations are allowed on campus. We work every day to foster a positive environment in which we can learn and work together. Protests are permitted as long as they do not:

- a. Interfere with the normal operations of the University.
- b. Prevent access to offices, buildings or other University facilities.
- c. Pose a threat to the maintenance of public order, as defined by Section 129A of the New York State Education Law.

Why are peaceful, nonobstructive demonstrations allowed on campus? These events may make people uncomfortable and/or not all people may agree with the protest.

Adelphi University is dedicated to learning through free inquiry and rational discourse. We believe an atmosphere of mutual trust, respect and responsibility is vital to the University's existence and the achievement of its objectives.

Adelphi supports diversity in ideological, political and intellectual views and does not diminish other people for their views no matter what their position may be.

Where individuals or groups feel called upon to exercise their rights to assemble or otherwise express dissent, they should do so with regard to the rights of others.

I understand there have been a few on-campus protests. Did these activities fall within these guidelines?

Yes, recent on-campus activities fell within the University guidelines. In each instance, to ensure they were clear and in compliance with University guidelines, the event organizers coordinated logistics with campus offices including public safety, student affairs and diversity and inclusion. Information about demonstrations is clearly set forth in Section 10.20 of the *Code of Conduct* and in the Adelphi University [emergency operations plan](#) on our public safety website.

I have been told that expressing one's right to free speech is the premise for allowing protests to happen on campus. How do I express myself if I don't agree with a protest? And what do we mean by free speech?

Freedom of speech is the right to express one's opinions and ideas. Criticism of the government and expressing unpopular ideas are included within freedom of speech. However, freedom of speech is not an absolute right and may be restricted at the University by the provisions of the Anti-Discrimination, Harassment (Including Sexual Misconduct, Dating Violence, Domestic Violence, Stalking) and Retaliation Policy. Moreover, speech that is considered bullying, threatening or intimidating is prohibited on the campus by the *Code of Conduct*.

There have been and will be on-going venues at which members of the Adelphi community have the opportunity to express differing points of view in a safe, respectful manner, guided by an objective facilitator. We encourage all members of our community to take advantage of these opportunities to share differing perspectives.

A student who would like to express a different viewpoint may organize a peaceful protest so long as it conforms with University policies. The Office of the Dean of Student Affairs can provide guidance and direction to members of the University community in this regard.

What does Adelphi do if it determines that protest banners, social posts and sharing of points of view at campus events are threatening?

Unlike situations unfolding on campuses across the country, issues that have arisen on our campus, with the exception of one or two instances, have fallen within the concept of free speech—both to agree or disagree with any position being taken.

We also recognize that some of the discourse, while not overtly threatening, could be and was offensive to many. While speech is free, it is important to remember that others read and hear our words and can be hurt, intimidated or deeply offended.

Social media offers a perceived veil of anonymity but that does not make language any less hurtful and we must remember that words expressed on these platforms have a global reach.

Any statements that we considered possibly threatening were referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards for follow-up.

How do I determine if comments fall within the concept of free speech or whether these comments are prohibited on the campus?

Discrimination, harassment and retaliation of any type will not be tolerated at the University. Nor does Adelphi support bullying, threatening or intimidating language or behavior (*Code of Conduct* Section 10.1B). And, we always follow up on instances that are reported. Due to the fact that so much shared on social media is posted to private accounts or in circles of friends, if you read something or see something which appears threatening posted on a social platform, do not assume that that threatening message has been seen by campus leadership. The quality and strength of collective experience require each of us to speak up in order to protect a campus culture and climate that we value and seek to foster.

Section 10.1B of the *Code of Conduct* reads:

All members of the University community, as well as visitors and guests, are required to treat each other with courtesy, consideration, and professionalism. The prohibited behavior includes intentionally or recklessly endangering, threatening, or causing reasonable apprehension of physical or mental harm to any person including oneself. This section also includes stalking or harassing behavior that includes, but is not limited to threatening language, bullying, physical, verbal, or written intimidation, including cyber harassment. The behavior in question is typically such that, if left unaddressed, the person would be denied the ability to participate in or benefit from some educational or other experience.

How do I report language or behavior that may be prohibited on the campus?

Threatening language or behavior to another member of our community should be reported immediately to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards (516.877.3612 or studentconduct@adelphi.edu).

Questions about or complaints involving discrimination, harassment or retaliation can be reported as follows:

- Use our online complaint form to report discrimination, harassment and/or retaliation
- Contact the appropriate individual below, or any member of the Anti-Discrimination Panel:
 - Student Complainants:
 - o Jeffrey Kessler (assistant vice president and dean of student affairs) at kessler@adelphi.edu or 516.877.3151
 - o Rhonnie Jaus (Title IX coordinator, director of equity and compliance) at titleix@adelphi.edu or 516.877.4819
 - Employee or Third-Party Complainants:
 - o Jane Fisher (director of employment, employee and labor relations) at fisher2@adelphi.edu or 516.877.3222
 - o Rhonnie Jaus (Title IX coordinator, director of equity and compliance) at titleix@adelphi.edu or 516.877.4819
 - General Comments or Inquiries:
 - o Rhonnie Jaus (Title IX coordinator, director of equity and compliance) at titleix@adelphi.edu or 516.877.4819

For emergencies or immediate assistance at any time on campus, contact the Office of Public Safety at 516.877.3511 or by dialing 5 from any campus phone.

Why do I feel uncomfortable with civil discourse?

We know that differences of opinion often generate passionately held viewpoints and differences of opinion. Our campus community is made up of thousands of individuals with a wide range of opinions and beliefs and we are fortunate to have deep resources including safe spaces, like-minded faculty and staff and an office of diversity and inclusion. These resources allow for a myriad of discussions, programs and offerings that deeply enhance and enrich our campus environment.

Universities should be a place for the exploration of differing ideas—ideas that challenge what we believe and how we view the world—and a community that seeks to bring more light than heat to difficult discussions.

I want to be actively engaged in fostering community at Adelphi. How can I be a part of the campus conversation on this topic?

There are many ways for you to be a part of this discussion. Seek out resources from the Student Counseling Center. Attend a program put on by one of our many student clubs. Be a champion for free, open and considerate speech by respecting others' rights to have opinions that are different from yours. Strive to learn from each other, especially when you see the situation differently.

The results of the election and recent events have challenged us as a community. We recognize that members of our community may be feeling especially vulnerable in light of the current political discourse. We have and will continue to host opportunities for our community to come together to explore the emotions generated by these events and to foster a positive dialogue. We invite all members of the Adelphi community to engage in ensuring an environment where all members of our community are respected and valued.

Where can I get more information?

We offer many University resources. Here are helpful links and points of contact:

- Office of Student Affairs (students.adelphi.edu/about/offices)
- Student Counseling Center (scc.adelphi.edu)
- Dr. Perry Greene, vice president of diversity and inclusion, greene@adelphi.edu
- Office of International Student Services (iss.adelphi.edu)
- Jeffrey A. Kessler, assistant vice president and dean of student affairs, kessler@adelphi.edu