

Report from Committee on Institutional Statements October 31, 2024

Executive summary

Dartmouth seeks to foster a community where faculty, students, and staff engage complex issues. To provide space for diverse viewpoints to be raised and fully considered, Dartmouth should exercise general restraint in issuing institutional statements.

When confronted with issues directly relating to Dartmouth's [mission](#), senior leaders will reaffirm Dartmouth's core values and commit to taking actions in support thereof. Institutional spokespersons for Dartmouth should be limited to the board of trustees, president, provost, and their specific designees; spokespersons for Dartmouth's schools should be limited to their respective deans and specific designees.

Dartmouth community members are free to make statements as individuals, including, for example, as subject-matter experts. The general policy of restraint, with exceptions for speaking on issues that affirm core values related to their missions or making their communities aware of resources, applies to the leaders of all Dartmouth's schools and academic subunits.

Principles

Any communication from Dartmouth's designated spokespersons related to core mission that is conveyed to the public, the entire Dartmouth community, or its schools is an *institutional statement*. In recent years, the principal medium for institutional statements has been email, in the form of a community message, but other types of media (for example, social media, press release) may also contain institutional statements.

Statements related to core mission

When confronted with issues directly relating to Dartmouth's mission, senior leaders will reaffirm Dartmouth's core values and commit to taking actions in support thereof. Examples of such issues include: eligibility criteria for membership in Dartmouth's community, educational opportunities, as well as support for research, creative expression, and civic engagement. Before issuing institutional statements, authorized spokespersons should consult with other members of the senior leadership on the advisability and content of a statement. Institutional statements should not be published on Dartmouth's main internet homepage (www.dartmouth.edu).

Rationale for restraint

Restraint at the institutional level protects and enhances freedom of expression because institutional endorsement for a specific position or belief may deter community members who do not share that belief from expressing their skepticism or opposition. An institution committed to inquiry and open discourse should, therefore, issue institutional statements sparingly – typically when external events have a direct impact upon the relationship of the institution to its members.

Academic units

The priority afforded to open, inclusive expression applies within Dartmouth schools and its academic units – departments, programs, centers, and institutes – as it does in the broader Dartmouth community. Therefore, the principle of restraint should guide statements from

Dartmouth's schools and academic units. That said, academic units are loci of specialized scholarly expertise and academic practice. On matters where such expertise applies, academic units may choose to issue public statements informed by their expertise. Academic units should be attentive to the beliefs of all their faculty, students, and staff members, and cognizant of the possibility that those with minority perspectives may be reluctant to express their views. Below, we recommend specific procedures to protect members with minority viewpoints.

Community support and information

Dartmouth also sustains its community by providing to its members information, practical support, and pastoral care, when appropriate. Communications about such support should come from each Dartmouth unit most closely responsible for its delivery (for example, college chaplain, health services, student life, housing, safety and security, etc.).

Committee input and community engagement

This committee includes faculty from all Dartmouth schools and with affiliations across the divisions in the Arts & Sciences, as well as the Senior Vice President for Communications, and staff from the Office of the General Counsel and of the Provost. Members of the committee consulted with faculty and staff colleagues, and with students, on the committee's remit.

In preparation of this report, the committee reviewed primary source materials as well as commentary on institutional statements, free expression, and academic freedom from a variety of sources and perspectives, as well as policies on institutional statements from the following peer institutions:

- University of California - all campuses (August 2024)
- University of Chicago (Kalven Report - 1967)
- University of Colorado, Boulder (August 2024)
- Columbia University (September 2024)
- Harvard University (May 2024)
- University of the Holy Cross (August 2024)
- Johns Hopkins University (August 2024)
- University of Michigan - all campuses (September 2024)
- University of Pennsylvania (September 2024)
- Princeton University (November 2022)
- Stanford University (May 2024)
- Vanderbilt University (undated)
- University of Wisconsin (September 2024)

A large number of peer institutions have taken action related to institutional statements during 2024 and all the changes of which this committee is aware represent greater restraint in issuing statements.

The committee also reviewed written feedback on institutional statements from members of the Geisel School faculty and welcomed input on its work from the following guests at committee meetings:

- Amber Barnato, Professor of Medicine and Director of The Dartmouth Institute
- Shontay Delaloe, Senior Vice President and Senior Diversity Officer
- Fayez Ghazi, Geisel medical student
- Provost David Kotz
- Michelle Warren, Professor of Comparative Literature and Senior Adviser to the Arts and Sciences Dean of Faculty for Faculty Development, Diversity and Inclusion

Having provided input to the committee does not, of course, indicate endorsement of this report or its recommendations.

Going forward, the committee anticipates further engagement to brief fellow faculty, staff, and students on our study and deliberations, and to receive further feedback, in the interest of aligning understandings and expectations between Dartmouth’s senior leadership and members of the Dartmouth community. Specifically, after completing our report (due November 1, 2024), committee members could meet, as availability permits, with faculty and staff committees in each of Dartmouth’s schools (identified by the respective school deans) as well as with representatives from student governments and other student groups (as recommended by the respective school deans).

Modifications to existing policy

We offer the following recommendations for modifications to Dartmouth’s existing policy on institutional statements:

Authorized spokespersons

Dartmouth’s [current policy](#) on institutional statements states that:

The board of trustees, the president, *the senior leadership team* [emphasis added], and designees are the recognized institutional spokespersons for Dartmouth. No other individual, group, or department has the authority to issue official institutional statements or speak on behalf of Dartmouth.

First, the policy should note that the authorization of senior leaders to speak for their institution applies for the schools within Dartmouth as well as for Dartmouth as a whole. Second, the composition of Dartmouth’s senior leadership group may not be widely known among faculty, students, and staff. We recommend that this policy should identify the specific officers of the College who are authorized to issue official statements. For Dartmouth as a whole, we recommend that these officers should be limited to those whose institutional remit encompasses all of Dartmouth – for example, the President, the Provost, the Senior Vice President for Communications, the Director of Media Relations, and the General Counsel.

We recommend amending the policy to state:

The board of trustees, the president, and the following *senior leaders* are the recognized institutional spokespersons for Dartmouth: [list per discussion above]. No other

individual, group, or department has the authority to issue official institutional public position statements or speak on behalf of Dartmouth. Each of Dartmouth's schools shall identify leaders who have the authority to issue statements on behalf of the school.

Public statements by academic units

Dartmouth currently lacks a specific policy on statements by academic units (departments, programs, centers, and institutes). We recommend the following policy to guide statements from academic units:

On matters where the expertise in scholarship and academic practice located in an academic unit is salient, members of that unit may decide to issue a public statement or to endorse a statement produced by another source. Such statements and endorsements should conform to the following practices:

- Before issuing a specific public statement or endorsement, and in a process separate from deliberation on any specific public statement or endorsement, the academic unit must establish the list of unit members who are enfranchised to propose and to vote on public statements or endorsements. Enfranchised members may include tenure-line faculty, non-tenure-line faculty, research associates, graduate students, and staff.
- Votes on any proposed statement or endorsement must be conducted anonymously.
- For any statement or endorsement the unit publishes, it must include a list of the categories of members enfranchised to vote (for example, "tenure-line faculty, lecturers, and research faculty") and the vote tally – the number of enfranchised members in favor, against, abstaining, and not voting.
- Before publication, the academic unit should inform the Provost of any statement it intends to publish or endorse.
- Public statements or endorsements should be published in a separate location from the unit's main channel of communications on curricular and administrative matters, campus activities, unit initiatives and programs, and resources available to students and unit members. Currently, the main channels of communications are the homepages of unit websites. In this context, the academic unit may establish a webpage other than its homepage to host public statements and endorsements from its members. Any statements or endorsements from the academic unit that preexist these guidelines should be moved from their current location to the unit's location dedicated to public statements and endorsements.
- Public statements or endorsements must include a clear disclaimer that the unit is not speaking for Dartmouth as a whole.
- Public statements and endorsements may not "participate in, or intervene in...any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office."
- No individual should purport to speak on behalf of the academic unit in any communication unless they have completed this process.

Appendix materials

Existing policy

This committee endorses, and seeks to build upon, key principles articulated in Dartmouth's [current policy](#) on institutional statements, restated here:

Dartmouth is committed to free speech and open inquiry and seeks a community in which a diversity of viewpoints can be freely shared and exchanged to promote deeper understanding of complex issues and ideas. Moreover, Dartmouth supports and protects the academic freedom of faculty to engage in scholarly activity.

The board of trustees, the president, the senior leadership group, and designees are the recognized institutional spokespeople for Dartmouth. No other individual, group, or department has the authority to issue official institutional statements or speak on behalf of Dartmouth.

Of course, Dartmouth community members are free to take positions as individuals, including, for example, as subject-matter experts. Such statements must be clearly made in an individual capacity and should include a disclaimer that community members are not speaking on behalf of Dartmouth.

Committee charge

This committee's charge articulates the following aspirations:

As noted in its mission statement, Dartmouth's "faculty [are] dedicated to teaching and the creation of knowledge." This dual mission is achieved through a community committed to open inquiry and the opportunity for discussion and debate of new, complex, and sometimes controversial ideas. Because any institutional statement about a matter of social or political controversy may cause some members of the community to feel they are less able to express their own opinions about such matters, the institution should be thoughtful about whether and when to make such statements. The recommendations of this committee will help articulate the principles by which the institution, and its component units, should consider making statements.

Approval of the committee report

On October 25, 2024, the full committee convened to review and vote on this report. The vote to approve the report was 6 in favor, 1 opposed, with the chair not voting (unless to cast a pivotal vote).

Voting in favor

Anderson
Fang
Holmes
Jerit
Pease
Renshaw

Voting against

Golder

Not voting

Carey (chair)

Committee membership

Justin Anderson, Senior Vice President for Communications
John M. Carey, Wentworth Professor in the Social Sciences (chair)
Hui Fang, Associate Professor, Thayer School of Engineering
Amy Flockton, Program Coordinator, Office of the Provost (staff support, non-voting member)
Peter N. Golder, Professor of Marketing, Tuck School of Business
Alison V. Holmes, Associate Professor of Pediatrics, Geisel School of Medicine
Jennifer L. Jerit, Douglas A. Donahue, Jr. 1973 Distinguished Professor of Government
Donald E. Pease, Ted and Helen Geisel Third Century Professor in the Humanities
Carl E. Renshaw, Professor of Earth Science
Esther C. Walker, Associate General Counsel (adviser, non-voting member)

Along with the report is a dissenting statement from Professor Golder. The committee voted – 4 in favor, 2 opposed, and 2 not voting – to recommend that, if and when its report is made public, the dissenting member’s statement should be made public as well.