

Interim Report Ad hoc committee on Freedom of Expression, Learning, and Community

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Committee Members: Naomi Kolton-Fromm (Religion), Steven Lindell (Computer Science), Giri Parameswaran (Economics), Jess Lord (Admission and Financial Aid; Corporation member), Sayeeda Rashid (Institutional Diversity, Equity, and Access), Theresa Tensuan '89 (Student Life), Paul Turner (Libraries), Bukky Olugbeko '25 (Students' Council officer of multiculturalism), Yehyun Song '25 (Students' Council co-president), Adam Trencher '25 (Students' Council senior class rep), Caroline Yao '27 (Honor Council co-chair, Affinity Group Coalition co-head), Vince Warren '86 (Board of Managers), David Wessel '75, Jackie Brady '89 (Corporation member)

Introduction

The mission and charge for the ad hoc committee on Freedom of Expression, Learning, and Community can be found [here](#).

Here, we provide a brief interim report on the committee's work from Fall 2024 and lay out the proposed work for Spring 2025. At the end of this interim report is a *working draft* of Community Principles and Values for Haverford College, identified as an area of needed contribution to support freedom of expression, learning, and community at Haverford.

We welcome feedback through the following ways:

- Members of the committee will hold **Listening Sessions** in collaboration with governance groups composed of elected representatives, as well as leaders of other organized groups representing the college community.
 - We will administer a **survey** to the current community of students, faculty, and staff.
 - An **anonymous feedback box** about the work of the ad hoc committee has been created and posted to the [committee website](#).
 - Email feedback can be sent to **hc-expressivfreedom@haverford.edu**.
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Fall 2024 Work and Preliminary Findings

- The ad hoc committee's 16-person membership is composed of faculty, staff, students, and alumni members. We met 7 times as a full committee and in subcommittees, in addition to the co-chairs holding other individual and small group meetings with committee members and other members of the Haverford community. We engaged in readings and research, and facilitated discussion and reflection among members.
- **We are in a period of reknitting our social fabric, lifting up our foundational ethos, and rearticulating and recommitting to our values.** We recognize that our work takes place in response to and during multiple serious challenges: a global public health crisis in COVID-19 that has had lingering social, psychological, economic, and structural impacts; a continued quest for racial justice that precipitated a student strike and raised issues related to structural inequities on campus as well as in the nation; a year of heightened violence in the Middle East that catalyzed student activism and surfaced strong differences in perspective; and a period of overall increased political polarization in our society. While the challenges we face regarding expressive freedom, learning, and community are not necessarily unique to Haverford, we approach these issues with a commitment to centering who we are as a community.
- We identified a need for clearly articulated **community principles and values** at Haverford, a working draft of which follows at the end of this report. Let us be clear that this is a *work in progress*, that we see the interim report as an opportunity to share this preliminary work with the community, and that we invite and encourage community feedback as we continue working on this proposal. We are formulating proposed community principles and values for the College community to consider formally adopting in its own evaluation process.
 - As part of our process, we reviewed key College documents and materials, and held multiple brainstorming discussions about what distinguishes and defines Haverford as a community. We examined community principles and values at peer and other institutions for context, and engaged with the work of constitutional law scholars, psychologists, philosophers, and sociologists. We are reviewing resources and making recommendations regarding how to help both new and existing community members better learn and engage with community principles in a more meaningful, enduring, and integrated way.

- We reviewed existing **policies** at Haverford alongside policies at peer and other institutions. We mapped out our current policies that are student-facing, faculty-facing, and staff-facing; identifying areas that could benefit from further clarification; and noting areas of difference or discrepancy. We are formulating recommendations to the College regarding process and content. We anticipate reviewing the new anti-discrimination, harassment, and bias policy when it is ready in Spring 2025 in the context of other policies and federal obligations at the College.
- We identified **three sources of tension** with which we grapple at Haverford, that also represent greater societal challenges that extend beyond our campus.
 - 1) How do we balance an approach to free speech that both protects expression and respects the need to ensure that a campus community is a conducive learning environment for all students, and work and research environment for faculty and staff?
 - a) Relatedly, how do attempts to disrupt oppressive structures and inequities in society influence the open exchange of ideas?
 - 2) How do we address the tension between a personal experience of discomfort (or even psychological or emotional “threat” or “harm”) by another’s expression with a belief in that person’s right to expression?
 - a) Relatedly, what is spirited or sharp disagreement versus “threatening” behavior?
 - b) Relatedly, how are we considering our responsibility to manage and navigate this tension not only when we are the one expressing ideas/beliefs, but also when we are the receiver of the expressions of others?
 - 3) How do we address the possible tensions between personal identity, investments, and viewpoints with communal dynamics, expectations, and norms? How do we do so particularly on a college campus where students, faculty, and staff share different spaces and occupy different institutional positions?
- We engaged in deep discussion and reflection upon the **Honor Code ([link](#))**, specifically the Social Code (starts p.7), noting its evolving nature and the changing contexts in which the Code lives, operates, and responds to student experiences. We affirm student agency over and responsibility for the Code’s evolution as an aspirational and constructive document over which each wave of

Haverford students takes ownership. The annual evaluation and affirmation of the Code requires all students to embrace and internalize the Code. In collaboration with the Honor Council co-chairs, we are working on queries and recommendations for the student body to consider in its annual reconsideration and in their commitment to fostering inclusive and respectful community spaces. We are also working on queries and recommendations for the President to consider with regard to the Code.

Recommended Resources

- *Free Speech on Campus* by Erwin Chemerinsky and Howard Gillman ([link](#); ebook available on [Tripod](#))
- Thirteen ways of looking at community ([link](#))
- What good is free speech if no one's listening? ([link](#))
- The Power of active listening ([link](#))
- Building Bridges: Fostering respectful conversations using psychological science (Dec 12th 2024 webinar by American Psychological Association; description [link](#); a recording will be posted shortly to the Ethics webpage, [link](#))
- General Plenary Community Guidelines ([link](#))

Plan for Spring 2025

The committee will continue our work in Spring 2025 largely through engaging with community voices for input and feedback.

- Members of the committee will hold **Listening Sessions** in collaboration with governance groups composed of elected representatives, as well as leaders of other organized groups representing the college community.
- We will administer a **survey** to the current community of students, faculty, and staff.
- An **anonymous feedback box** about the work of the ad hoc committee has been created and posted to the [committee website](#).
- Email feedback can be sent to **hc-expressivfreedom@haverford.edu**.

We will continue working on written findings, conclusions, and recommendations for Haverford through Spring 2025, and will share a final report with the community in June 2025.

[DRAFT] Community Principles and Values
Ad hoc committee on Freedom of Expression, Learning, and Community

This is a DRAFT document of proposed Community Principles and Values for Haverford College. We look forward to feedback and suggestions from the Haverford community. Ways to share feedback and suggestions are outlined at the start of the interim report.

Selected references:

Earlham College: Mission, Principles, Practices ([link](#))

UC Berkeley Principles of Community ([link](#))

Haverford is, first and foremost, an **educational institution** where the free exchange of ideas is the context in which our community is grounded. As lifelong thinkers and learners, we are driven by the **search for knowledge based upon disciplined, rigorous, and free inquiry and debate**. We aspire to broaden and enrich each person's development, promote intellectual and personal growth, cultivate excellence through the learning environment, and prepare our students for lives of integrity, ambition, purpose, and ethical impact in local and global settings. We make contributions to knowledge and society through research, scholarship, creative work, and community engagement.

We **accept, expect, and welcome friction and disagreement** in our diverse and inclusive learning community that supports the free sharing of information and viewpoints, including those that are often unheard and/or under-valued. We aspire towards **radical listening and responsive dialogue across differences**. We affirm the importance of **making space for all voices** over suppression of voices with which one disagrees. We acknowledge the role of protest in bearing witness.

Our community principles are grounded in the **Quaker values** of ***Community, Equality, and Recognizing the Light*** in each community member. We recognize everyone's inherent worth and we see value in each person's wisdom and contributions to the community. We encourage continuous learning, examination, and questioning. We approach learning with humility, openness, and curiosity. Our interactions are guided by the tenets of ***Mutual Trust, Concern, and Respect***: Trust that we engage with one another with good intentions and a desire to understand; Concern for others, their well-being, and the interaction between individual and community; and Respect for others as equals who all have an inner light.

We pose the following **queries** to help members of our community engage in ongoing thoughtful self-examination and inward reflection centered around our community principles and values.

- Am I committed to ongoing learning, critical thinking, and intellectual rigor? Do I seek truth and strive for knowledge, even when it is challenging and/or uncomfortable?
- Do I open myself to new information and other viewpoints? Am I able to evolve in my thinking and revise a previously held position?
- Do I make space for all voices, especially those often unheard and/or under-valued?
- Do I listen to understand and learn, rather than to argue and proclaim? Do I express disagreement openly and respectfully? Do I participate in open dialogue in good faith?
- Am I mindful of how I engage with the community? Do I speak with compassion, care, and thoughtfulness? Do I treat others with kindness and respect?
- Do I contribute to a community rooted in mutual trust, concern, and respect that fosters wellbeing for everyone? Do I assume my share of responsibility for our shared life within community?
- Do I value, support, and embrace speaking truth to power? Do I communicate what I believe needs to be said, especially to those who should hear it and to those who have the opportunity to make change?
- Do I act responsibly and with integrity? Do I hold myself and others accountable for lapses in integrity?