

Morehouse College

Freedom of Expression and Peaceful Assembly Policy

1. **Scope and Applicability**

This policy is specifically crafted for Morehouse College Community and is a testament to our commitment to inclusivity and fairness, applying to all current students, faculty, staff, administrators and alumni of Morehouse. Please note that this policy is designed in accordance with the College's values and internal governance standards and does not extend to non-members of the Morehouse Community. Except as otherwise set forth herein, non-Morehouse Community Members are prohibited from organizing and/or participating in freedom of expression activities or assemblies on the Morehouse College campus absent explicit invitation and approval by the College.

2. **Purpose of the Policy**

At Morehouse College, we hold academic freedom and the exchange of ideas in the highest esteem. We recognize the crucial role of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly as cornerstones of scholarly pursuits and intellectual discourse. This policy is a testament to our unwavering commitment to ensuring that expressions and assemblies on campus are conducted in a respectful and orderly manner and do not disrupt academic and operational activities. The principles of this policy are deeply ingrained in the belief that the entire campus is a space for members to foster community through expression, protest, and dissent, ensuring that voices of the Morehouse Community can be heard in a safe and supportive environment.

3. **Definitions**

3.1. **Morehouse Community:** Refers to all students, faculty, staff, volunteers and alumni actively associated with Morehouse College.

3.2. **Amplified Sound:** Sound that is increased or enhanced by any electric, electronic, or mechanical means, including megaphones. Other sounds, such as shouting or chanting, are subject to general disruption regulations, which govern the acceptable noise level in each area.

3.3. **Campus Grounds:** All outdoor areas owned, leased, or controlled by the College that are common and accessible to students and employees, such as sidewalks and park-like areas.

3.4. **Designated Areas:** Specific outdoor areas of the property that may be reserved for expressive activity. Kilgore Student Center Plaza and King Chapel Plaza are designated areas. Additional areas may be designated as needed, following a transparent and inclusive process involving the Office of Student Services, Campus Police, and relevant stakeholders.

3.5. **Disruptive Activities:** Actions that impede, interrupt, or disturb the normal operations of the College, including classes and business activities, or which significantly hinder or disrupt another person's or group's expressive activity through the use of unlawful behavior, harassment, imminent threats of or incitement to violence as more fully defined in Section 5.

3.6. **Spontaneous Expression:** Unplanned assemblies arising directly in response to recent, unforeseen events, requiring immediate action without feasible opportunity for formal planning.

3.7. **Impromptu Protests:** A subset of spontaneous expressions that occur within 48 hours of an incident, characterized by a lack of premeditation and urgent public discourse.

4. **Types of Peaceful Assemblies**

At Morehouse College, we recognize and support the right of our community members to engage in peaceful assemblies as a vital form of expression and participation in democratic processes. This section categorizes the various forms of assemblies that are permissible on campus, each defined to clarify understanding and ensure that these activities are conducted in a manner that respects both the rights of the participants and the ongoing functions of the College. **Peaceful assemblies are subject to and limited by Section 6 of this policy.**

4.1. **Demonstration:** A public gathering for a political cause, possibly including a march and rally, characterized by spontaneity.

4.2. **March:** A planned walk by a group to express dissent towards specific events, policies, or situations.

4.3. **Protest:** An organized event where participants voice their opposition to issues through action or speech.

4.4. **Sit-in:** A nonviolent occupation of a non-restricted location where participants refuse to leave as a protest.

4.5. **Vigil:** A gathering often held to promote peace and unity, possibly in commemoration or as a response to an event.

5. **Prohibited Conduct**

Morehouse College is committed to fostering a campus environment where open, vigorous, and challenging debate takes place in a context of mutual respect and scholarly inquiry. To maintain this environment, the College prohibits conduct that falls below these standards, including harassment, hate speech, threats and violence.

5.1 **Harassment:** Unwelcome conduct, whether verbal, written, visual, or physical, that is based upon a person's protected characteristics, such as race, religion, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation, which is so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies or limits a person's ability to participate in or benefit from the College's educational programs, activities, or opportunities.

5.2 **Hate Speech:** Any form of expression that incites violence, promotes hatred, or discriminates against individuals or groups based on their protected characteristics, as mentioned above. This includes, but is not limited to, speech, printed material, or behavior that is threatening or has the purpose or effect of disrupting the educational process and/or creating a hostile environment.

5.3 **Imminent Threats or Incitement to Violence:** Any communications or behaviors that directly threaten imminent physical harm or explicitly incite imminent acts of violence within the college community. This policy specifically targets explicit threats—whether verbal, written, or symbolic—that are intended to provoke immediate violence or create a clear and present danger to individuals or groups on campus.

6. **Restricted Locations for Expression, Assemblies Events and Meetings**

6.1. Private offices, research laboratories, associated facilities, and computer centers.

6.2. Specific areas of offices, museums, libraries, and other facilities containing valuable or sensitive materials.

6.3. Classrooms, seminar rooms, auditoriums, meeting rooms, or spaces currently used for educational or private events.

6.4. Exterior walls, doors, windows, glass and other surfaces of campus buildings, benches, fences, utility poles, statues, monuments and other similar structures.

6.5. Areas that impede free traffic flow or pose health and safety risks.

6.6. Residence halls, Century Campus, Forbes Arena, and essential service facilities.

6.7. Traditional college events, including but not limited to Crown Forum, Baccalaureate, Commencement, Homecoming, New Student Orientation, Convocations, and other events hosted in spaces designed as restricted.

7. **Guidelines for Assembly Planning**

7.1. **Organizer Eligibility:** Only members of the Morehouse Community can plan assemblies. Proposals must be submitted to the Office of Student Services at least 3 days in advance, except in cases of spontaneous expression.

7.2. **AUCC Students:** Currently enrolled students at an Atlanta University Center Consortium school wishing to organize and peacefully assemble on the College's campus must obtain sponsorship from an officially recognized Morehouse student organization. The sponsoring organization must coordinate with the Office of Student Services to ensure compliance with all applicable college policies.

7.3. **Approval Procedure Overview:** The proposal approval procedure takes 3-5 business days. Before approval, a pre-approval meeting must be scheduled to discuss logistics and ensure that academic activities and campus operations are not disrupted. Coordination with relevant campus offices is mandatory, including Campus Police, who play a crucial role in ensuring the safety and security of the assembly. Campus Police will advise on crowd control, traffic management, and emergency response. Please note that there may be time restrictions.

7.4. **Financial Responsibilities:** Any expenses that may occur during the review process will be specified before and after. These costs may include facility rentals, security expenses, equipment rentals, insurance, maintenance, permit fees, and accessibility accommodations. The exact amount and breakdown of these expenses will be communicated to the organizers on time to allow proper planning and budgeting.

7.5. **Time, Place and Manner Restrictions:** Reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions are enforced to maintain educational integrity without content discrimination. These restrictions are determined based on the nature of the assembly, its potential impact on the campus community, and the need to ensure that academic and operational activities are not disrupted. Assemblies, such as encampments, the erection of tents or other structures that disrupt college operations, block access, or the use of amplification that interferes with educational or administrative activities or occurs in restricted areas is prohibited.

7.6. **Impromptu Protests in Non-reserved Spaces:** We support the pivotal role of impromptu expression, dissent, and protest. Immediate notification to the Office of Student Services or Campus Police is encouraged. A post-event report, including a description of the event, the number of participants, and any issues that arose, is required within 24 hours after the event concludes. The report should be submitted to the Office of Student Services for record-keeping and future reference. Protests in restricted spaces are not permitted and will result in immediate removal from the space.

8. **Non-compliance and Enforcement**

8.1. Failure to adhere to this policy and guidelines may result in disciplinary actions as permitted in the Student Code of Conduct and Employee Handbook, including but not limited to warnings, probation, suspension, or expulsion, depending on the severity and frequency of the violation.

8.2. Disruptive activities will not be tolerated and may be referred to appropriate administrative offices for action.

8.3. Campus Police and partnering agencies reserve the right to remove anyone or anything violating this policy or threatening the college's operations and academic pursuits.

9. **Appeal Process**

9.1. Decisions about using campus grounds for expressive activities can be appealed to an independent review panel composed of representatives from the Office of Student Services, Campus Police, and other relevant campus offices. The panel's decision is final and is based on a thorough review of the circumstances and adherence to the policy.