

On-Campus Assemblies and Demonstrations

A. Values

Villanova University is a Catholic, Augustinian institution of higher learning that is committed to academic excellence, academic freedom, and intellectual, spiritual, moral, and social growth. Above all, the University seeks to reflect the spirit of St. Augustine by the cultivation of knowledge and the encouragement of freedom of inquiry, by respect for individual differences, and by adherence to the principle that mutual love and respect should animate every aspect of University life.

Respecting the principles and responsibilities of academic freedom, and recognizing the importance of the perceptions of both internal and external communities, the University encourages the open exchange of ideas on a variety of subjects, including those that are controversial. In fact, Villanova officially recognizes the right and even the responsibility, at times, of the University community to express their collective or individual voices for or against a given issue. The fundamental rights of freedom of inquiry, speech, and lawful assembly both ensure and limit this right to demonstrate. Villanova, to be true to its university status, must foster investigation, concern, and the essential elements which make academic freedom a viable reality. Thus, Villanova University students, student groups or student organizations may peacefully assemble or demonstrate to address the full range of intellectual, moral, and social issues. In keeping with the educational mission of the University, the academic character and educational value of all such events is the motive and rationale for their occurrence.

Opportunities to assemble or demonstrate do not imply University approval or endorsement of the positions taken by those assembled or of their previous or subsequent views. To the best of its ability, the University will ensure that all assembled will be able to express their views and that open discussion will take place. This policy presumes that those organizing an assembly or demonstration will exercise sound judgment in establishing the particulars of a given event.

Although this policy assumes that members of the community will exhibit appropriate and respectful demeanor toward each other, it is recognized (a) that some issues may often challenge existing attitudes and beliefs and/or trigger disagreements, and (b) that no policy, no procedures, and no organizer of an assembly or demonstration, can guarantee against the possibility that an expression may offend listeners, that some assembled may unexpectedly deviate from anticipated expression, or that participants in the event or other members of the community might engage in inappropriate behavior.

The following conditions, guidelines and responsibilities govern on-campus assemblies and demonstrations by Villanova University students, student groups and student organizations (also referred to as “Event”). If the assembly or demonstration involves an outside speaker, the provisions of the “Events and Speakers Policy” must also be followed.

B. Conditions

1. The freedom to peacefully assemble and/or demonstrate to express the merits of competing ideas does not mean that individuals may say or do whatever they wish, wherever they wish. The University prohibits expression that violates the law, falsely defames a specific individual,

constitutes a genuine threat, violates the [University's Non-Discrimination and Non-Harassment Policies](#) or other provisions of the Code of Student Conduct, or unjustifiably invades substantial privacy or confidentiality interests.

2. The assembly or demonstration must not involve a substantial risk of disrupting classes, obstructing access to campus facilities, otherwise interfering with other ongoing University events or activities, or creating a seriously intimidating, threatening, scandalizing, and/or uncivil environment. To this end, the University may reasonably regulate the time, place, and manner of expression to ensure that it does not disrupt the ordinary activities of the institution.
3. The property of the University and that of the members of the University community are not to be damaged, destroyed or violated.
4. The assembly or demonstration must not pose a substantial risk to the physical safety of participants, bystanders or other community members.
5. The assembly or demonstration must not place undue burden on the University's finances, facilities or other resources.
6. It is understood that some assemblies and demonstrations may support and defend positions that differ from Catholic Church teaching. The expectation is that they will do so in a responsible fashion, be open to questions and challenges from members of the community, and respectfully acknowledge, and not disparage, Church teaching. If, in the judgment of University officials, an assembly or demonstration presents a serious risk of violating these principles, the university may impose provisions and restrictions.

C. Planning and Prior Notification Guidelines

In order to maximize the likelihood that the goals of a demonstration or assembly are met and to ensure the safety of all community members, organizers of a demonstration or assembly should adhere to the following guidelines prior to scheduling an event.

1. If the Event is organized by a recognized student group or organization, organizers should meet with the group or organization's advisor to discuss strategies to ensure that the event will adhere to the Values and Conditions sections of this policy.
2. If the Event is not organized by a recognized student group or organization, organizers should meet with the Director for Student Involvement or his/her/their designate to discuss strategies to ensure that the event will adhere to the Values and Conditions sections of this policy.
3. After appropriate discussion, organizers should work in collaboration with appropriate university departments (e.g. The Department of Public Safety, Facilities Management) to coordinate logistics of the event to ensure compliance with the Values and Conditions sections of this policy and to meet the responsibilities outlined in Section D below.
4. Organizers should communicate the parameters that have been set for the Event by the University to all participants prior to the Event and should take reasonable measures to ensure the safety of participants.
5. When demonstrations or assemblies are scheduled, participants should expect University personnel, including members of the Villanova University Department of Public Safety, to be present for all or part of the Event. This presence is often necessary to ensure organizers' own rights are protected and the University's regular operations and activities are not interrupted. Accordingly, University representatives may film, photograph or record elements of the event. The presence of University personnel should not be viewed as an effort to deter or otherwise interfere with planned demonstrations or assemblies.

D. Responsibilities

All Villanova University students, student groups and student organizations have the right to peaceful assembly and demonstration (including, but not limited to, rallies, gatherings, protests, and processions) on campus. However, all assemblies and demonstrations must adhere to the Values, Conditions and

Responsibilities sections of this policy and must not be unduly disruptive to the life of the University or place any community member in danger. Disruptive or unsafe assemblies or demonstrations are strictly prohibited.

Responsibility to Ensure Safety and Security

The responsibility of maintaining peace and order rests primarily with the individual(s) or group(s) who organized the Event. All demonstrators are expected to comply with University policies and students are additionally expected to act in compliance with the provisions of the Code of Student Conduct.

During a demonstration, the expression of viewpoints may invite or elicit a response from others, including counter-demonstrators or passersby. In all circumstances the right of others to personal expression must not be denied. Organizers should be aware that other demonstrations may also occur that may include opposing views. Maintaining peace and order is especially important under these circumstances to support a rich campus environment that is accepting of divergent expression. Accordingly, expression that is indecent, obscene or grossly offensive on matters such as race, age, ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation or other legally protected bases is inconsistent with accepted norms of conduct at the University and will not be tolerated.

In order to avoid any misunderstanding of what is a peaceful assembly or demonstration (permitted) and what is a disruptive or unsafe assembly or demonstration (prohibited), the following non-exhaustive list of characteristics is provided.

An assembly or demonstration is disruptive or unsafe if it includes any activity that:

- Places the health or safety of any member of the University community at risk
- Denies or unreasonably interferes with the rights of other students, faculty, or staff of the University, including the rights of others to demonstrate
- Employs force or violence or threatens force or violence against any persons or property
- Violates any ordinance or law.
- Creates a volume of noise that prevents members of the University community from carrying on their normal activities
- Results in actual or threatened destruction, damage or defacement of personal property
- Results in actual or threatened destruction, damage or defacement of University property, grounds or facilities.
- Congregates or assembles in any University building or on University property in ways that disrupts the University's normal functions
- Occurs in a way that blocks entrances, exits, or passageways from or to any University building or vehicle traffic on or to the campus. Corridors, stairways, doorways, and building entrances may not be blocked or obstructed in violation of the regulations of the University or local fire codes.
- Fails to comply with any other University policy or any other lawful directive, including a directive to cease the Event.

Disruptive or unsafe assemblies or demonstrations will be suspended or stopped immediately at the direction of the Villanova University Department of Public Safety in consultation with The Vice President for Student Life or the University Provost or their designee. The University may also seek the assistance of local law enforcement to disband disruptive, unlawful or unauthorized events.

Responsibility to Conclude the Assembly or Demonstration

The length of any given assembly or demonstration may vary. Demonstrations will usually be permitted to continue until and unless University officials determine that University operations and/or the rights of others have been compromised. This includes staff who may be attempting to close facilities according to the established closing hours of buildings.

At the conclusion of any assembly or demonstration, the organizers are expected to make a reasonable effort to return the grounds/area to the condition it was in before the Event. This includes properly disposing of all garbage. Any unanticipated and accidental property damage should be reported to University administrators immediately. Any property damage related to a demonstration (whether peaceful or disruptive) may result in the assessment of fees for cleaning, repairs, and replacement of property to the organization or individuals involved or both.