

Bakersfield College Statement

Support of Freedom of Expression for All BC Community Members

Because Bakersfield College is committed to free and open inquiry in all matters, including the [“Core Value of Diversity”](#), it guarantees students, staff, faculty, and administration of Bakersfield College the broadest possible latitude to speak, write, listen, challenge, and learn. Except insofar as limitations on that freedom are necessary to the functioning of Bakersfield College, Bakersfield College fully respects and supports the freedom of all members of Bakersfield College “to discuss any problem that presents itself.”

Of course, the ideas of different members of the Bakersfield College community will often and quite naturally conflict. But it is not the role of Bakersfield College to attempt to shield individuals from ideas and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable, or even deeply offensive. Although Bakersfield College greatly values civility, and although all members of Bakersfield College share in the responsibility for maintaining a climate of mutual respect, concerns about civility and mutual respect can never be used as a justification for closing off discussion of ideas, however offensive or disagreeable those ideas may be to some members of our community.

The freedom to debate and discuss the merits of competing ideas does not mean that individuals may say whatever they wish, wherever they wish. Bakersfield College may restrict expression that violates the law, that falsely defames a specific individual, that constitutes a genuine threat or harassment, that unjustifiably invades substantial privacy or confidentiality interests, or that is otherwise directly incompatible with the functioning of Bakersfield College. In addition, Bakersfield College may reasonably regulate the time, place, and manner of expression to ensure that it does not disrupt the ordinary activities of Bakersfield College. But these are narrow exceptions to the general principle of freedom of expression, and it is vitally important that these exceptions never be used in a manner that is inconsistent with Bakersfield College’s commitment to a completely free and open discussion of ideas.

Bakersfield College’s fundamental commitment is the principle that debate or deliberation may not be suppressed because the ideas put forth are thought by some or even by most members of the Bakersfield College community to be offensive, unwise, immoral, or wrong. It is for the individual, not for Bakersfield College as an institution, to make those judgments for themselves, and to act on those judgments not by seeking to suppress speech, but by openly and vigorously contesting the ideas that they oppose. Indeed, fostering the ability of members of Bakersfield College to engage in such debate and deliberation in an effective and responsible manner is

essential to Bakersfield College educational mission and support of Bakersfield College's ["Core Value of Diversity"](#)

Although members of the Bakersfield College community are free to criticize and contest the views expressed on campus, and to criticize and contest speakers who are invited to express their views on campus, they may not obstruct or otherwise interfere with the freedom of others to express views they reject or even loathe. To this end, Bakersfield College has a solemn responsibility not only to promote a lively and fearless freedom of debate and deliberation, but also to protect that freedom when others attempt to restrict it.

This resolution is adapted from the ["Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression"](#) at the University of Chicago, July 2014.