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APRIL 18, 2018

AAU Public Affairs

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AAU PRESIDENTS AND CHANCELLORS REAFFIRM COMMITMENT TO FREE SPEECH ON CAMPUS

At their spring meeting this week, the Presidents and Chancellors of the Association of American Universities member universities strongly endorsed the following statement:

The free and open exchange of ideas and information is fundamental to the educational mission of AAU universities. The robust discussions and debates that occur at research universities have been central to the advancement of democracy, the creation of new knowledge, the fostering of educational excellence, and the promotion of social progress. As heads of these institutions we are unequivocally committed to preserving and honoring this proud heritage.

While we may deem some speech to be odious, disgraceful, and antithetical to our values, our campuses are and should remain places where ideas can be expressed free of disruption, intimidation, and violence.

We are committed to preparing our students, faculty, and staff to engage in thoughtful, non-disruptive debate. Our collective responsibility to educate our campus communities on their rights and responsibilities is of the utmost importance and one we embrace. While protecting the expression of ideas, we will also take all steps necessary to promote an inclusive and non-discriminatory learning environment, and protect our communities from those who seek to promote conflict rather than conversation, debate, and advocacy.

We will continue to prepare students, faculty, and staff to engage in frank, open, and often challenging discussions. Our universities will also work to ensure that campus policies on speech, events, dissent, and other protected activities are publicly and conveniently available. We believe these actions are critical for our institutions to remain at the forefront of ensuring that substantive and non-violent speech is fully protected and welcomed in our society.

In restating these values, we aspire to be a model for society of how a free and democratic people should work through disagreements and arrive at a deeper understanding of important issues and of each other.

Founded in 1900, the Association of American Universities comprises 62 distinguished institutions that continually advance society through education, research, and discovery.

Our universities earn the majority of competitively awarded federal funding for academic research, are improving human life and wellbeing through research, and are educating tomorrow's visionary leaders and global citizens.

AAU members collectively help shape policy for higher education, science, and innovation; promote best practices in undergraduate and graduate education; and strengthen the contributions of research universities to society.

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