

# Report of the Committee on Postering, Building Use, and Demonstrations

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## The Work of the Committee

In March 2025, Jennifer Scanlon, senior vice president and dean of academic affairs, and Jim Hoppe, senior vice president and dean of student affairs, reached out to Bowdoin Student Government, the Faculty Committee on Governance and Faculty Affairs, and the Bowdoin Staff Advisory Group for nominations for a cross-campus committee that would be charged with drafting a set of recommended policies governing use of campus common spaces (postering, demonstration, and protest) and campus communications channels (listservs, digests, Campus Groups, events calendars, and social media). [See the end of this document for a list of committee members.] The committee’s work was designed to be one item among multiple efforts detailed in President Zaki’s March 7 message to the campus community titled [Working Together](#). These efforts are intended to promote a “culture of dialogue” on campus that is characterized by courage, humility, and kindness.

This set of recommendations is informed by the commitment of the College to serving the [common good](#) and the mission of the College (to [engage students in the education of their minds, the exploration of their creative faculties, and the development of their social and leadership abilities](#)). Meeting these goals obliges us all to respect human rights and freedom of speech and to consistently extend to one another the [tolerance, honesty, and civility](#) that make for an [environment free of fear and intimidation where differences can flourish](#).

We see the various forms of communication and action addressed by these guidelines as integral to Bowdoin's educational mission. Our efforts are intended to facilitate communication in all its forms: postering, messaging, demonstration, and protest. As an institution of higher learning that is committed to advancing knowledge to serve the common good, Bowdoin is obliged to uphold academic freedom. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) describes the imperative of academic freedom as follows: "The knowledge produced and disseminated in colleges and universities is critical for the development of society and for the health of a democracy, an idea often expressed by the phrase 'for the common good' or 'for the public good.' The common good depends upon the free search for truth and should not be guided by the desires of wealthy donors, by partisan political aims, by religious institutions, or by the desire not to offend."

In line with these commitments, we intend that the resulting guidelines will be:

1. Respectful of human rights broadly and of freedom of speech and academic freedom specifically.
2. Universally applicable to students, staff, and faculty.
3. Content-neutral, meaning the policies do not attempt to define or constrain allowable speech apart from discrimination, harassment and bias as generally established by the law as applicable to higher education (as explained in existing Bowdoin policies pertaining to [social code violations, harassment, and bias](#), found in the [code of community standards](#) for students and the [employee handbook](#) for faculty and staff).\*
4. Transparent and clear—published on the College's website and socialized among the members of the College.

\*Content-neutral policies emerged as a best practice among peers and a recommendation from organizations committed to free speech.

The committee is charged with making recommendations for consideration by senior officers. Once a set of guidelines is approved by senior officers, we recommend that the guidelines be effective immediately in order to satisfy the pressing need for clarity expressed by a wide variety of constituents. However, we also recommend that a clear and genuine mechanism for collecting feedback (like the standing community feedback form we used to craft these recommendations) be initiated and that feedback be collected over one full academic year, so that a review of these policies can be conducted after living with them for two semesters.

The committee put significant effort into gathering broad and detailed input across campus from April to June 2025. This effort consisted of the following:

- Research on peer policies including but not limited to NESAC schools and policies recommended by organizations committed to free speech;
- A survey with open-ended questions available to the entire community, publicized using the faculty, staff, and student digests and announcements within divisions of the College (for instance at the faculty meeting);
- Interviews and targeted survey outreach to key college constituencies, including but not limited to student affinity, identity, and religious organizations; Bowdoin Student Government; students and faculty and staff with a history of and dedication to activism and advocacy; the local chapter of the AAUP; those whose jobs require enforcing policies related to facilities and communications or are affected by large campus events, such as the Office of Safety and Security, Bowdoin Dining, Student Activities, Residential Life, the Offices of Inclusion and Diversity, Communications and Public Affairs, Facilities, and Environmental Health and Safety; those with expertise about how activities like exhibitions and art and speech are governed and supported in other realms such as the museums and the McKeen Center. The outreach continued to grow by “snowball sampling,” as those we talked with referred us to others we should talk with and as peers approached us with ideas.

In total, we engaged with approximately ninety-five individuals and groups via forums, surveys, and interviews.

The feedback was wide-ranging. Nevertheless, a few common observations emerged:

- Members of campus stated it will be important to clarify where to locate current policies related to postering, campus communication channels and social media, events, use of space, and demonstrations and protest. (Hence, we recommend posting them on the website and educating the campus community as to their content.)
- Members of campus stated that it will be important to clarify who enforces policies and what recourse or remedy is available in instances of suspected violation.
- Members of campus agreed that detailed and readily accessible guidelines are essential, as this would enable members of our campus to calculate beforehand the risks of taking various actions and to know to whom to direct queries and concerns.

## Recommended Policies

In what follows, the committee aims for policies that are:

1. Respectful of human rights broadly and of freedom of speech and academic freedom specifically.
2. Universally applicable to students, staff, and faculty.

3. Content-neutral, meaning the policies do not attempt to define or constrain allowable speech apart from discrimination, harassment and bias as generally established by the law as applicable to higher education (as explained in existing Bowdoin policies pertaining to [social code violations, harassment, and bias](#), found in the [code of community standards](#) for students and the [employee handbook](#) for faculty and staff).
4. Transparent and clear—published on the College’s website and socialized among the members of the College.

## Posters

***All posters are to be subject to these same policies, regardless of content.***

### **Responsibilities of individuals and groups hanging posters:**

1. Hang posters in designated areas (as indicated by corkboard or signage on the wall).
2. Include date and the name of all sponsoring departments, organizations, or individuals at Bowdoin on all posted materials.
3. Leave space for the whole community to use the designated poster areas.
4. Do not cover other posters.
5. Obtain express advance permission from the area’s poster manager before hanging any items that are larger than standard poster size (24 x 36), like banners, or are outside any of the other parameters laid out here.
6. Avoid damaging external and internal building surfaces.
7. Avoid posting on external building or steps, plaza, or monument surfaces.
8. Avoid posting on glass doors or the glass portion of doors, for the safety of those exiting and entering the building. Posting on interior solid doors and on glass sidelights is permitted. Posting on many but not all solid exterior doors is permitted; check with the area’s poster manager before proceeding. (For instance, most residential buildings allow it, but buildings with historical significance where the doors are special architectural features, for instance Hubbard Hall and Smith Union, do not.)
9. Use official Bowdoin logos and wordmarks (e.g., the Bowdoin seal) only with express permission of the Office of Communications.

### **Responsibilities for buildings/departments/halls with poster display spaces:**

10. Designate “poster managers” for high-traffic areas, such as the entrances to the dining halls and the route extending from Smith Union through Buck and Druckenmiller, ultimately identifying one poster manager for every relevant building and/or floor on Bowdoin’s campus. The method for designating a poster manager will draw on interest and capacity and existing ways of designating responsibilities for spaces—like the system for identifying fire captains.

They might, for instance, be department coordinators (as is already the case in some academic buildings) or RAs/proctors in residence halls.

11. Reserve space if desired for academic departments to post their own announcements adjacent to their office space (any size material, any length of time).
12. Routinely monitor adherence to these policies, which may include removing posters that do not comply and/or relocating posters to allow the designated spaces to be available for everyone's use.
13. Permit posters conforming to policies to remain up for two weeks or until the event has passed, whichever comes first. All posters will be removed at the beginning of fall, winter, spring, and summer breaks.
14. When possible and practical, notify individuals or groups to modify their posters to comply with these policies, for instance, by adding attribution, correcting misuse of a logo, or rehanging in the designated area. Poster managers will not notify individuals or organizations about routine maintenance (such as out-of-date posters).

**Additional considerations:**

15. Any individual may contact the Office of Inclusion and Diversity (OID) with a concern that a poster has violated existing Bowdoin policies pertaining to harassment, discrimination, or hate speech, using the [same form used to report any other type of violation of these policies](#). Definitions of those terms can be found in the [code of community standards](#) for students and in the [employee handbook](#) for faculty and staff.
16. Remove posters after the designated two weeks. This task is the responsibility of the individual or group who hung the poster, the area's poster manager, or facilities personnel acting at the request of the poster manager.

See Recourse/Remedy section for additional information.

## Communication Channels and Social Media

Official communication channels at Bowdoin include but are not limited to listservs by employment category (e.g., all-faculty, all-staff) and class year (e.g., seniors@) and Campus Digests. These channels already have moderators and so were not prioritized as needing new recommendations for oversight. Guidance about use of these resources can be found in the [guidelines for use of faculty listservs](#) and for [Campus Digest posts](#). Class year listservs are moderated by designees of the SVP of student affairs, including staff in Student Activities. Guidelines regarding [use of College resources related to political speech](#) also apply.

Our concern is with referencing Bowdoin or members of the Bowdoin community on the public platforms of social media (Instagram, Facebook, X, etc.).

1. Organizations using campus communications channels and/or including Bowdoin in their social media handles must either be an authorized student group or, if an employee (faculty and/or staff group), identify at minimum two contact people so that the speech is not anonymous.\*
2. Nonconsensual audio and video recording and posting of recordings is a violation of [community norms and expectations](#) and may also be a violation of Maine law.
3. Targeting individual students, staff, or faculty by name or likeness via social media may be a violation of community norms as expressed in the Human Rights in the Bowdoin Community section of the [Faculty Handbook](#). This text calls for “recogniz[ing] the dignity and worth of every other member” and “willing[ness] to declare intolerable any act or statement that constitutes or results in the harassment or intimidation of another human being.”
4. In the case of suspected harassment/targeting via social media:
  - a. Pursue remedies via the platform host company.
  - b. Consult with the Bowdoin ombuds or the Office of Inclusion and Diversity for guidance, which could include a process to document the impact and any potential remedy under Bowdoin’s policies.

See Recourse/Remedy section for additional information.

*\*In Additional Considerations, the committee recommends that the College develop a relatively simple process TBD for identifying contacts for faculty/staff groups; a process for student groups is already established.*

## Use of Space

Bowdoin College welcomes a variety of on-campus events to further the intellectual mission of the College and complement the academic and cocurricular offerings organized by a variety of departments and registered groups. Events open to the public can contribute to stronger relationships between the College and the local community. Bowdoin students, faculty, and staff planning events on campus assume responsibility for taking steps to ensure that the event supports the physical safety of attendees and complies with these policies and with relevant state and federal laws, and that colleagues whose time and resources are used to support events are well prepared.

Per college policy, any event or campus speaker must be sponsored by a college department, recognized student organization, or recognized faculty/staff group. Events must be formally registered through Campus Groups and should be registered two weeks ahead of the event date if set-ups, AV, or security are required. If RSVPs are required, attendees (including members of the public) should RSVP through an appropriate channel. The Office of Safety and Security will be notified of any large events and will loop in relevant offices as needed.\*

The Committee recognizes that determining when to cancel or interrupt an event of any kind, including a protest or demonstration, is one of the hardest questions we considered. While we recognize that circumstances may vary and be hard to predict in advance, and that those on the ground will always have to exercise judgment based on conditions, we recommend that those making decisions set a very high bar for cancellation or interruption so that it is rare and exceptional, reference all existing codes of conduct and the values articulated at the top of this document, and be as transparent as they can in describing the reasons.

See Recourse/Remedy section for additional information.

*\*In Additional Considerations, the committee recommends that the College develop a relatively simple reporting system out of Campus Groups that the Office of Safety and Security can review on a regular basis in order to understand whether any upcoming events might require additional support and coordination.*

## Demonstrations and Protests

Bowdoin College strongly supports and facilitates freedom of speech, academic freedom, the exchange of ideas and different points of view, and the right to protest and demonstrate for students, faculty, and staff. These freedoms must be balanced against the need to protect the physical safety of others and the rights of other members of the Bowdoin community to access the campus.

1. Protests and demonstrations must not violate federal, state, or local laws (e.g., fire/life safety codes, health codes, criminal laws, building occupancy limits).
2. Protests and demonstrations may not block access to or exit from a venue where an event is being held.
3. While protest is a respected form of speech at Bowdoin, it may not include harassment, intimidation, or silencing by use of loudspeakers or other methods or physical contact with others, including counterdemonstrators, an audience, a speaker, college officials, or a specific individual. Intimidation is behavior that involves a threat or act of violence meant to deter or coerce others.
4. Participants in demonstrations and protests must also heed the [College's](#) and [Brunswick's noise policies](#).
5. Policies related to protests and demonstrations apply to all college property.
6. Defacing any college property is strictly prohibited. Any display signs, message material, or equipment may not be attached to any external building surface without the approval of the senior vice president for student affairs or other relevant senior officer. This includes messages projected on campus buildings. Any messaging materials must also comply with the campus postering policy.

7. The College reserves the right to direct members of the public who are not members of the college community to leave College property at any time and for any reason.

See Recourse/Remedy section for additional information.

## Recourse/Remedy

Given the number of constituents who reported that recourse and remedy related to most of the policies above are unclear, we have attempted to outline applicable resources depending on the situation:

1. Call the [Office of Safety and Security](#) at 207-725-3500 in the case of possible immediate danger or harm to anyone.
2. The process for *any* member of the Bowdoin College community to pursue concerns about harassment, discrimination, misconduct, or hazing is outlined in [Institutional Equity and Compliance](#). Updated definitions and individuals designated as confidential and non-reporting resources related to Title IX are maintained on the [College's Title IX page](#).
3. Anyone concerned about potential harassment, discrimination, or hate speech in any form (poster, media, at an event, etc.) is encouraged to contact the Office of Inclusion and Diversity (OID). [This is the tool](#) used to collect reports about any type of violation of these policies.
4. Note that, in the majority of cases, the solution to a poster or post that doesn't conform to policies described here is simply to take it down (and potentially repost if it can be updated to conform). Other recourse related to posters generally would not be needed unless there was damage to property or language or action that would violate existing policies on assault, discrimination, harassment, or bias.
5. The Office of the Dean of Students and Student Activities can advise students in advance about approaches to activism that would conform with these policies. The Office of the Dean of Students and/or the Conduct Review Board would be involved in violations of college policy, including the [Academic Honor Code and Social Code](#), as applicable.
6. Employees of the College (faculty and staff) seeking a confidential consultation for initial guidance, especially in ambiguous situations, are encouraged to contact the ombuds.
7. A direct supervisor and/or the Office of Human Resources can advise and advocate for an employee in a case of harassment, discrimination, or misconduct, but also in a range of situations outside those definitions.
8. Violations of the policies outlined here may result in disciplinary actions per guidance outlined in the code of community conduct for students and the faculty handbook and employee handbook for faculty and staff. Students, faculty, and staff also need to consider state and federal law.

## Additional Considerations

1. Train the leaders of staff, faculty, and student groups on the updated policies, accompanied by a short quiz covering these policies for all members of campus.
2. Create a method for faculty and staff to establish a group that could book spaces, hang posters, and/or use Bowdoin in their name or social media handle, allowing for accountability and follow-up with at least two people (without necessarily having to register full membership).
3. Create a relatively simple comprehensive Events Report out of Campus Groups at least weekly that the Office of Safety and Security can review in order to prepare proper safety supports for each event and notify any other relevant offices.
4. Ask poster managers of the most-trafficked spaces—entrances to Thorne and Moulton Dining Halls, the Buck breezeway leading to Druckenmiller, Druckenmiller, and Smith Union—to work with facilities to ensure posting spaces are clearly defined by corkboard or signage.
5. Plan a series of events to promote a “culture of dialogue” on the Bowdoin campus.
6. Consider adopting a policy addressing “bullying.”
7. Consider adding to the student code of conduct and the [professionalism standard](#) for all employees either a bullying policy or language similar to the Human Rights in the Bowdoin community language in the [Faculty Handbook](#), which calls for “recogniz[ing] the dignity and worth of every other member” and “willing[ness] to declare intolerable any act or statement that constitutes or results in the harassment or intimidation of another human being.”
8. Establish a process among those responsible for investigative and disciplinary systems on campus to consult before engaging in proceedings that affect more than one category of Bowdoin constituent (students, faculty, and/or staff).

## Considered but Not Recommended at This Time

1. **Curate a space on campus for anonymous posting.** One model we looked at (Providence College) includes the periodic thoughtful posting of a question on a large blackboard centrally located on campus; to engage in this would take more thought and preparation.
2. **Selectively suspend enforcement of poster policies to encourage/honor spontaneous protest as expressed in posters. Or the opposite, disallow all but event marketing**

**posters.** Members of the community presented each of these content-driven views passionately. But either of these would undermine the fundamental principle of content-neutral rules focused on governing use of common spaces rather than defining/constraining acceptable speech.

## List of Committee Members

- Kristin Brennan, *executive director of career exploration and development*
- Raphael Grand’Pierre ’27
- Erin Hambidge ’27
- Sophaktra Heng, *website content manager, Office of Communications and Public Affairs*
- Christopher Huerlin, *associate professor of government and Asian studies*
- Kevin Loney, *assistant athletic director for facilities and event management*
- Rebeca Manzo ’27
- Madeleine Msall, *Josiah Little Professor of Natural Science*
- Mackenzie O’Connor, *associate director of events and summer programs*
- Elizabeth Pritchard, *associate professor of religion*
- Luke Purinton ’28
- Mike Ranen, *associate dean for academic administration*
- Rachel Reuling, *academic department coordinator, biology and neuroscience*
- Harper Stevenson ’27
- Ephraim Tutu ’28