



Makola M. Abdullah, Ph.D.
President

VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY
VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY, VIRGINIA 23806
P.O. Box 9001
(804) 524-5070
(804) 524-6506 FAX

December 5, 2024

The Honorable Glenn Youngkin
Governor of Virginia
P. O. Box 1475
Richmond, Virginia 23218-1475
Jeff.Goettman@governor.virginia.gov

The Honorable Ghazala F. Hashmi
Senate Chair
Education and Health Committee
P.O. Box 396
Richmond, Virginia 23218
senatorhashmi@senate.virginia.gov

The Honorable Sam Rasoul
House Chair
Education Committee
P.O. Box 13842
Roanoke, Virginia 24037
DelSRasoul@house.virginia.gov

Dear Governor Youngkin, Senator Hashmi and Delegate Rasoul:

Virginia State University continues its commitment to the constitutional principles of free expression and open exchange of ideas. The University believes that it demonstrates this pledge through a variety of resources, trainings and programs for our students, staff, faculty and community. After all, this University's legacy rests on the very shoulders of those committed to the precepts of the Constitution and fundamental fairness.

The University continues to maintain its Free Speech policy webpage, <https://www.vsu.edu/student-life/student-activities/free-speech-vsu/>, with links to the University's various policies and state regulations affecting public demonstrations, free speech, and distribution of materials. Additionally, this website includes guidance on how to report incidents involving infringement upon constitutionally protected speech. The University's Student Handbook¹, the current Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Misconduct and Retaliation Policy², Facilities Use Policy³, and the Student Organization Handbook⁴ aptly demonstrate this point.

¹ <http://www.vsu.edu/files/docs/student-activities/student-handbook.pdf>

² <https://www.vsu.edu/files/docs/policies/1000/discrimination-harassment-and-retaliation-prevention-policy-1101.pdf>

³ <http://www.vsu.edu/files/docs/policies/4000/university-facility-use-cost-recovery-policy-4200.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.vsu.edu/files/docs/clubs-and-organizations/student-organization-handbook.pdf>

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The University's Office of Student Life and Engagement, part of the Division of Student Success and Engagement, continues to present free expression policies at the regular Trojan Induction Program (TIP), the University's standard orientation program for all entering freshmen. This same Division provides similar guidance at campus Town Hall meetings and Leadership Council meetings, including the Presidents of all student-led organizations, and the University's regular Graduate Studies Fair. The Division of Student Success and Engagement also provides Free Speech/Assembly education for members of the Student Conduct Hearing panels.

In addition to the aforementioned policies and regulations, the University's Free Speech webpage, <https://www.vsu.edu/student-life/student-activities/free-speech-vsu/free-speech-faq.php>, includes frequently asked questions and procedures for students, staff, faculty, and others who wish to report incidents of infringement of constitutionally protected speech. This page includes links to resources, staff contacts and the University's Free Speech Form.

At this time, there have been no complaints filed against the University or employees of the University in their official capacity alleging violations of the First Amendment since December 1, 2018. Any prior matters on this issue filed against the University have been determined to lack merit. Should you have any questions about these prior cases, the Virginia Attorney General's Office would be available to provide details.

On behalf of the University, I am happy to certify the fulfillment of all requirements of § 23.1-401.1 of the *Code of Virginia*, including the notification to all responsible employees of free expression materials. Virginia State University will continually labor to improve our knowledge and guide our community in this ever-changing free speech landscape.

Please accept our earnest appreciation for your continued commitment to the Commonwealth. Feel free to contact us should you have any questions about our statutory compliance or certification.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Makola M. Abdullah', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Makola M. Abdullah, Ph.D.
President