

### **1.33 – INSTITUTIONAL NEUTRALITY**

**Effective:** XXXX, 2025

**Purpose:** This policy affirms the commitment of the University as a state agency to remain neutral on political, religious, and ideological matters, in accordance with its primary mission as a public educational institution. This policy aims to protect academic freedom, support a diverse and inclusive learning environment, and maintain public trust while ensuring that the University and its resources are not improperly utilized to endorse, promote, oppose, or denigrate specific political, religious, or ideological viewpoints.

**Scope:** This policy applies to all University employees, including faculty, staff, and administrators, and governs the use of University resources, facilities, communication platforms, and activities conducted under the University's name. It also applies to official University communications and events.

**Responsible Office:** General University

#### **Policy Statement:**

##### **Institutional Neutrality**

Without the express approval of the University President, the University shall not endorse or take official positions on political, religious, or ideological matters unless such actions are required by law or Kansas Board of Regents' policy, or unless such actions uphold the mission of the University, including but not limited to promoting academic freedom, intellectual diversity, and open inquiry.

##### **Public Statements**

Official University public statements related to political, social, or public policy matters will be reserved for rare occasions where they directly involve or significantly impact:

- the University's core mission of changing lives for the common good;
- the University's strategic plans, priorities, or operations;
- the ethical and professional standards outlined in the University's policies; or
- the health, safety, and wellbeing of University community members in their roles as faculty, staff and students.

University personnel in their official capacity shall refrain from making public statements or other communications that support or oppose any political candidate, political party, religious belief, or ideological position.

Additionally, this policy does not restrict the University's communication with the news media on routine matters of policy, operations, and events.

This policy shall be construed and interpreted consistent with the established principles of the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States along with the University's interest in promoting the efficiency of its public services. By memorializing the neutrality of the University, this policy intends to support the following positional statement shared by other institutions of higher education:

It is for the individual members of the University community, not for the University as an institution, to make [judgments about ideas] 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 the University community to engage in such debate and deliberation in an effective and responsible manner is an essential part of the University's educational mission.

- Excerpted from the "Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression," University of Chicago, 2014.

### **Academic Freedom**

The University is committed to the principle of academic freedom and intellectual diversity, and supports the right of faculty, students, and staff to explore, debate, and express a wide range of ideas and opinions, provided these expressions do not purport to represent the official position or opinion of the University.

### **Use of University Resources**

University resources, including facilities, communications channels (emails, websites, social media, etc.), funds, and equipment, may not be used to solicit, support, oppose, or promote political campaigns, religious movements, or ideological initiatives.

Any request to use University resources for public events or communications that may be perceived as endorsing a political, religious, or ideological cause must be reviewed by the Office of General Counsel.

### **Invited Speakers and Events**

The University may invite speakers or host events that represent a diversity of viewpoints, including those on political, religious, and ideological topics, provided these events are aligned with the University's educational mission.

University sponsorship of an event or speaker does not imply endorsement of the speaker's views. All promotional materials and other announcements for such an event must clearly state that the views expressed are those of the speaker and not the University.

### **Individual Expression**

Faculty, staff, and students are free to engage in political, religious, or ideological activities in their personal capacity as allowed by law, provided such activities are conducted outside of their University roles and without the use of University resources.

**Definitions:** All words and phrases shall be interpreted utilizing their plain meanings unless otherwise defined in University or Board of Regents policy or by statute or regulation.

**Procedures:** All procedures linked and related to the policies above shall have the full force and effect of policy if said procedures have first been properly approved by the University's administrator in charge of General University procedures.

[[Hyperlink to General University procedures](#)]

**Related Policy Information:** 1.07 – Use of University Property for Free Expression Activities; 1.20 – Political Activity; 4.07 – Academic Freedom

**History:** Adopted: XX/XX/2025 [Approved by President and included in UPM as 1.33 – Institutional Neutrality]