

On a Quest for Truth: Carroll College Policy on Public Events and/or External Speakers

I. Background of the Policy

Carroll College's first external speaker policy was developed from 2006-2008 through the work of a task force that comprised members of the Faculty Council, a committee of tenured faculty members who serve in an advisory capacity to the President of Carroll College, and members of the Board of Trustees. In Fall 2020, Carroll began a process of review of the policy and a group of faculty, staff, administration and one Trustee were charged with reviewing and revising the policy as described [here](#). This working group consulted documents such as [Ex Corde Ecclesiae](#) and others endorsed by the [Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities](#), and documents generated by members of the Carroll community (e.g., [Catholic Identity and Academics](#) and [The Nature of Academic Freedom](#)). They were also inspired by statements and policies on public events and invitations to outside speakers from other Catholic Colleges and Universities.

II. Purpose of Policy

- A. To facilitate planning for Public Events or External Speakers on College property or at College-hosted events off campus or virtually;
- B. To encourage the college community to engage a diversity of people, ideas, and perspectives;
- C. To ensure that the educational goals and the mission of Carroll College are considered when planning a Public or External Speaker Event;
- D. To assure that campus events and discourse will be safe and respectful.

III. Philosophy: Educational Context for Campus Events/External Speakers Policy

1. Mission and the Catholic Intellectual Tradition

As stated in [Ex Corde Ecclesiae](#), "...the objective of a Catholic University is to assure in an institutional manner a Christian presence in the university world confronting the great problems of society and culture" (§13). Accordingly, "It is the honor and the responsibility of a Catholic University to consecrate itself without reserve to *the cause of truth*" (§ 4). In [Fides et Ratio](#), Pope John Paul II writes that "faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth." In 2018, [Pope Francis](#) affirmed this principle when he told a delegation from Villanova, "Universities, by their very nature, are called to be workshops of dialogue and encounter in the service of truth, justice, and the defense of human dignity at every level. This is especially true of Catholic institutions." Carroll College carries out this challenge confidently as a Catholic, diocesan, liberal arts college in the ecumenical tradition of the Second Vatican Council.

[Carroll College's Mission Statement](#) is the framework for how the College embraces this honor and responsibility. It begins with the College's commitment to **Instilling an enduring wonder for knowledge** that lies at the core of learning. The idea of the sacramentality of all knowledge is part of the lived traditions of Carroll College. As Carroll's former Dean of Mission, Dr. Chris Fuller, states

in his essay [Catholic Identity and Carroll College: A Proposal](#), “The Christian doctrine of the incarnation affirms that because all creation comes from God, and because God became part of that creation in the person of Jesus, God has become ‘fully immersed in and committed to the material world.’” A sacramental worldview within this Catholic theological framework refers to more than the seven sacraments. It refers to the manner by which material things can serve as instruments of grace. Therefore, as [Fr. Michael Himes](#) writes, “nothing is by definition profane. Everything is potentially sacramental.” Thus, in its mission, in its connection to the Catholic intellectual tradition, and its lived traditions, Carroll College is committed to considering for reflection multiple ideas and perspectives that constitute our material world. As stated in our Mission Statement, Carroll practices this through the liberal arts in the context of the Catholic intellectual tradition and their “traditional role of providing for the expansion of the intellectual, imaginative, and social awareness” of our students as well as encouraging them “to participate in a broad spectrum of academic disciplines.”

As an integral part of its liberal arts education, as stated in Carroll’s mission, Carroll welcomes contributions from a variety of perspectives as part of the search for truth by **Offering an integrative and value-centered education rooted in freedom of inquiry**. Carroll endeavors an understanding that is not merely multi-disciplinary and multi-perspectival, but that also seeks to critically integrate insights from differing disciplines, both secular and religious, and approaches within them. In addition, it incorporates questions of meaning, the good, and the dignity of all persons in its integrative endeavors.

As a Catholic college, Carroll’s mission **Engag[es] faithfully the intellectual tradition and the teachings of the Catholic Church**. As reflected in contemporary debates about Laudato Si’ and issues of war and peace, the Catholic intellectual tradition has always engaged in robust dialogue, exploring humanity and the universe in their totality. In the [Idea of the University](#), Cardinal John Henry Newman argues that a Catholic institution of higher learning “is not a Convent, it is not a Seminary; it is a place to fit [people] of the world for the world.”

Catholicity in its deepest meaning is an affirmation of the global resonance of its message. In the context of higher education it is especially an insatiable intellectual curiosity and an appetite to explore and understand the totality of reality, including the human experience in all its expressions. As such, engaging the Catholic intellectual tradition is an adventure in discovery that can lead to intellectual and spiritual discomfort. It requires intellectual boldness, respect for learning and profound wonder at Creation in all its awe-inspiring and humbling complexity. In a living, searching, and deepening exploration, faith and reason are exercised in a complementary relation. The gifts of Reason and Revelation combine to extend an invitation to engage in this quest for truth. In the Catholic intellectual tradition scholars and students view this quest as a sacred obligation.

2. Academic Freedom and the Catholic Intellectual Tradition

The [U.S. Bishop’s Application for Ex Corde Ecclesiae](#) states “the purpose of a Catholic university is education and academic research proper to the disciplines of the university” and that “academic freedom is an essential component of a Catholic university”(Art. 2§ 1 & 2). Catholic colleges and

universities, from their very origins, have not only welcomed but also invited diversity of thought and lively debate on the variety of issues that energize an academic community's search for truth, especially in difficult and sensitive areas. There is no contradiction between the ideas of academic freedom and our Catholic identity.

Therefore, Carroll College must be a crossroads:

where all the vital intellectual currents of our time meet in dialogue; where the great and sometimes difficult issues of the world and of the Church are thoughtfully explored in their depths and complexities;
where all sincere seekers are welcomed, listened to and respected through a serious consideration of what they have to say about their beliefs or unbelief, their understandings and questions;
where differences in ways of thought, of conviction and of life can stand in an appreciative relationship; and
where over time continual conversations can be cultivated and not foreclosed.

Accordingly, the [Carroll College Mission Statement](#) declares that, "As an academic community, Carroll College affirms its commitment to the principle of freedom of inquiry in the process of investigating, understanding, critically reflecting upon, and finally judging reality and truth in all fields of human knowledge."

Our professional organizations likewise affirm this commitment. The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, our institutional accreditor, points out in its 2020 [Standards on Academic Freedom \(2.B.2\)](#) that:

Within the context of its mission and values, the institution defines and actively promotes an environment that supports independent thought in the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge. It affirms the freedom of faculty, staff, administrators, and students to share their scholarship and reasoned conclusions with others. While the institution and individuals within the institution may hold to a particular personal, social, or religious philosophy, its constituencies are intellectually free to test and examine all knowledge and theories, thought, reason, and perspectives of truth. Individuals within the institution allow others the freedom to do the same.

Similarly, in the statement on [Academic Freedom and Outside Speakers](#), the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) reminds us that "the freedom to hear is an essential condition of a university community and an inseparable part of academic freedom," that we also "bear the obligation to ensure conditions of peaceful discussion," and that "only in the most extreme and extraordinary circumstances can the near certainty of imminent danger justify rescinding an invitation to an outside speaker."

While Carroll College recognizes that facilitating such free expression is not always easy and may even be controversial or unsettling to some, it also recognizes that providing varied opportunities for such expression is fundamental to its role and responsibility as an academic institution, and precisely as a Catholic college.

IV. Guiding Principles

Carroll College's Public Event and External Speaker Policy is grounded in Carroll's mission as a Catholic, diocesan, liberal arts college in the ecumenical tradition of the Second Vatican Council. Carroll College is strongly committed to providing an environment where all matters of human ideas and experience – especially challenging matters – can be explored openly, heard, contemplated, and argued productively in an environment of collective respect.

The following principles guide the organization of public events and invitations to outside speakers to Carroll's campus:

Academic Freedom. – Historic practice and documentation (e.g., [Ex Corde Ecclesiae](#), the [Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities](#), [Carroll's Mission Statement](#)) as well as professional organization expectations (e.g., [AAUP](#) and [NWCCU](#)) establish academic freedom as essential to the work of the College. Carroll College acknowledges the expertise of faculty in academic matters. Moreover, universities, colleges, and other higher education organizations recognize that the “classroom” extends beyond the four classroom walls and specific class time blocks to broader campus events, including events to which external speakers are invited and events open to the public. To encourage the college community to engage a diversity of issues and perspectives and to encourage civil dialogue in a robust educational environment, speakers and public events will ordinarily be welcomed on campus.

Alignment with Carroll's mission. – Carroll College recognizes a distinction between inviting speakers and planning events with the purpose of exploring a point of view as part of understanding the wholeness of human experience and inviting speakers and planning events the primary purpose of which is to advocate for positions opposed to the [values of Carroll's mission](#). For example, it is well within the Catholic Intellectual Tradition and the mission of the College to explore the lives and beliefs of white supremacists at a College event, but inviting a speaker whose sole purpose is promoting white supremacy would need more careful consideration.

It is the responsibility of the institution to have a diversity of events, including those that address Carroll's mission and Catholic identity. Speakers may hold and defend positions that differ from Catholic Church teachings with the expectation that their presentations are suited to an academic context and will be conducted in a respectful manner.

Institutional non-sponsorship disclaimer. – Carroll College provides a forum for the discussion of ideas and opinions but unless otherwise specified no individual, presentation, or performance represents the views of the College.

Subsidiarity. – Carroll College follows the Catholic principle of subsidiarity, in which governance occurs at the lowest level possible but the highest level necessary.

Institutional honors and awards. – Events planned by and speakers honored by the institution itself (e.g., graduation speakers, Founder’s Day events, honorary degrees) convey institutional approval and will therefore require approval by the President and the Board of Trustees in consultation with the Chancellor.

Significance to the community. – The speaker and the event should be of relevance to the Carroll community with the speaker having competence in their subject matter, either through scholarship, art, and/or personal experience. As a Catholic institution of higher education, Carroll as a whole is particularly committed to including events that explicitly explore the Catholic Intellectual Tradition, such as our annual Faith and Reason Lecture, events around Laudato Si’, or matters of social justice.

Safety. – The College neither dictates nor censors the content of campus events and recognizes that exploring intellectual and spiritual assumptions may cause discomfort. But the College must ensure that speech and expressive activities do not place community members at risk of physical harm or impede in institutional functions. Thus, when such concerns arise, the event will need to be coordinated with the appropriate offices on campus to ensure the physical safety of our community.

A model for respectful discourse. – College events will be organized and communicated transparently. In accordance with Carroll’s mission, our community is committed to respectful dialogue, which models sensitivity to lived experience, cultural humility, genuine listening and critical reflection, especially when addressing difficult topics. This is crucial to counteract the trends toward intolerance increasingly observable in society.

V. Scope of Policy

- A. This policy applies to either of the following:
 - 1. Campus events when off-campus persons or organizations are invited to speak, perform, or present.
 - 2. Campus events open to the public.

- B. This policy does not apply to:
 - 1. Speakers invited by faculty to address students enrolled in a course they are teaching or to advance the learning goals for the class or academic program.
 - 2. Internal faculty, student or staff seminars, workshops, or colloquia.
 - 3. Speakers or events that are hosted by a non-Carroll organization or individual as part of an external facility use or rental arrangement and that do not fall under the definition of a Public Event or External Speaker.
 - 4. Events planned by and speakers honored by the institution itself (e.g., graduation speakers, Founder’s Day events, honorary degrees) convey institutional approval

and will therefore require approval by the President and the Board of Trustees in consultation with the Chancellor.

VI. Procedures for Organizing Public Events or Events to which External Speakers are Invited

Invited speakers and public events will be welcomed on campus to encourage the college community to engage diverse ideas, people, and perspectives. These events will nurture civil dialogue, further cultivating our rich and vibrant educational environment. This policy presumes that those inviting speakers or hosting events will exercise sound judgment in establishing the details of a given event. Thus, event organizers enjoy wide latitude in this regard. Although this policy assumes that both speakers and audience will exhibit appropriate and respectful demeanor toward each other, it is recognized (a) that speakers or events may challenge existing attitudes, ways of thinking, or beliefs, and (b) that no policy, no procedure, and no organizer of a speech or event can guarantee against the possibility that a speech may offend some listeners, that a speaker may unexpectedly deviate from anticipated content and style, or that members of an audience may engage in inappropriate behavior.

1. A faculty or staff member wishing to organize a public event or invite an external speaker to present at a College event will seek the advice of the most appropriate department chair, division head, and/or administrator colleagues before extending an invitation or planning. This is especially important for an event that a reasonable person within the Carroll community would consider to be in conflict with any of the Guiding Principles above. Student clubs will seek the guidance of the club's faculty or staff advisor.
2. Organizers of events open to the public or when off-campus persons or organizations are invited to speak, perform, or present must complete the [Early Planning Notification Form](#) as soon as planning for the event has begun, and no later than 4 weeks before the event (but see below for exceptions). The Early Planning Notification Form asks for the following information:
 - **Who:** Name and contact information of organizer(s). ● **When:** Date and time of event
 - Form should be filled out a minimum of four weeks prior to the event.
 - Opportunities to invite external speakers or hold public events may, occasionally, arise on short notice. In such cases, the organizer is to complete the Early Planning Notification Form as soon as possible and immediately notify their department head and Vice President of their division.
 - **What:** Event details: title, speaker, date, time, modality (on campus or webinar), and a short description of the event to include the educational objective of the event and the event type (lecture, panel, performance, other).
 - **Intended Audience:** Is the event open to the public?
 - **Legal Contract:** Is a contract required for the event or speaker?

3. Student Clubs must also follow established [student club rules](#).
4. The Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs (SVPAA) and the Vice President for Student Engagement and Mission Integration (VPSEMI) will receive all notifications.
5. The SVPAA has primary responsibility for all faculty organized events and the VPSEMI has primary responsibility for all staff and student club organized events. If any concerns arise, the SVPAA or VPSEMI, according to their area of primary responsibility, will consult with the event organizer. Concerns of the vice president and any suggested adaptations or conditions shall be duly considered in light of the **Philosophy and Guiding Principles** sections of this policy as well as the 2006 "Report on the Nature of Academic Freedom." If more discussion is necessary, any members of faculty and staff with expertise in the subject matter of the event may be consulted. Carroll's Mission statement also acknowledges the role of the theologian to act as a mediator between religion and culture, and the role of the Bishop of the Diocese of Helena, who serves as the Chancellor and spiritual leader of Carroll College. The College further acknowledges the role of Faculty Council for matters related to the protection of academic freedom for faculty, staff, and students on campus.
6. As an institution with a rich tradition of academic excellence, Carroll College consistently organizes events of important intellectual and cultural inquiry without a hint of controversy. In very rare exceptions, conditions may be placed on an event, an invitation may be withdrawn, or an event may be denied if it is not aligned with the Philosophy and Guiding Principles of this policy. In such cases, the final decision rests with the SVPAA who will discuss such decisions with the President and the Faculty Council, and in the case of a staff or a student club organized event with the VPSEMI and Staff Advisory. The SVPAA will follow with a written explanation of the decision.
7. If any Carroll College faculty, staff, or student believes that academic freedom has been infringed, a complaint may be made in writing to the Faculty Council, which consists of a group of tenured professors and the President of the College. It is the responsibility of tenured faculty members to protect the academic freedom of all members of the campus community. Therefore, the Faculty Council is the appropriate forum to consider such an appeal.
8. Organizers seeking to invite a speaker or plan an event must make all of the arrangements necessary for the event. Failure to do so may result in refusal to allow the invitation or event. If there is a legal contract required for any speaker, approval of such contract must be obtained from the Vice President for Finance, Administration, and Facilities Management.

VII. Disclaimer

1. In light of the College's commitment to freedom of inquiry, the invitation, planning, or hosting of guest speakers, programs, and events does not imply that College or any of its organizations or units approves or endorses the views or ideas expressed.
2. This position must be made clear to the invitees. At events, the following disclaimer should be read during the introductory remarks:

Carroll College seeks to provide a campus intellectual environment that encourages the pursuit of truth, critical thinking, responsible decision making, civil debate, and respectful dialogue. Carroll College neither agrees nor disagrees with views expressed, but rather provides a forum so that each person attending may hear, contemplate, and discuss the ideas and opinions presented.

VIII. Community Concerns with an Event

1. If any faculty, staff, or students have concerns with the event, those concerns should first be respectfully discussed with the organizer of the event. If concerns still exist after discussion, community members are free to: a) attend the event; b) respectfully participate and ask questions at the event; and/or c) plan another college event.
2. If any community members who are not current faculty, staff or students have concerns with the event, those concerns should be directed to the SVPAA or VPSEMI.
3. Protest by members of the College community is a form of expression of free speech that is supported by the College, provided such activities are conducted civilly and safely, and do not violate a speaker or performer's ability to be heard and an audience's ability to see and hear a speech or performance.
4. It is the responsibility of designated College officials and the organizer, working together, to assess the potential for protest in conjunction with an event and make arrangements for reasonable accommodation of protesters from the campus community as part of the event plan.
5. When deemed necessary, such arrangements may include reservation of appropriate space(s) adjacent to the event venue for protesters. However, it is not required that protests be limited to a specific location, and all publicly accessible spaces on the campus are available for protest, provided that such activities do not violate this or other College policies.

IX. Guidelines for All Events

1. Read the Disclaimer at the beginning of any event open to the public.
2. Include a "Question and Answer" period for events such as lectures and panel discussions.

3. Have a facilitator as deemed appropriate for the event.
4. Name the organizers and if applicable, funders.