



Programs, Protests, and Plazas: How University Community Members (and Others!) Can Use Campus Space

2026 Legal Symposium

Presented by

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Agenda

1

University Policy 601.6, Use of University Space: Understanding when and where space reservations are required for campus events and activities, and parameters around use of space.

2

First Amendment Principles: Reviewing how a public university manages its space while supporting free speech.

3

Demonstration Safety: Identifying resources, including the Demonstration Activity Resource Team (DART), to encourage safe demonstrations on campus.

University Policy 601.6, Use of University Space

University Policy 601.6, Use of University Space, governs the use of all UNC Charlotte spaces to support both the University's academic mission and open debate, ensuring accessible and orderly use for University operations.

Scope

Covered Facilities

Governs all spaces owned, leased, operated, or controlled by UNC Charlotte.

Campus Activities

Covers use of space for instruction, Major Events, Expressive Activities, postings, chalking, sales, etc.

Space Use

Users

Subject to the Policy provisions applicable to each user, University Space may be used by:

- University Groups,
- Student Organizations, students,
- University employees,
- Sponsored Non-University Groups, and
- Non-University Groups and individuals.

Responsibility

Reservations

Responsibility for reserving University Space is delegated to the [Conference, Reservations, and Event Services \(CRES\) Office](#).

Exceptions

- Instructional Space (curricular)
- Assigned Space
- Restricted Space

Campus Space Classification

Some campus spaces are classified to prioritize intended uses and academic or administrative functions.

Assigned Space

Departmental/Unit Administration

Administered by specific departments or units; spaces include offices, conference rooms, lounges, and designated non-instructional laboratories and/or buildings.

Instructional Space

Academic Priority

Designed for instructional purposes, including classrooms and laboratories, with academic scheduling taking first priority.

Restricted Space

Limited Access Controls

Areas generally unavailable to be reserved, requiring limited access for safety or security, such as specific laboratories or artifact storage.

Residential Space (Assigned Space)

Housing & Residence Life

Facilities supporting the on-campus residential program; control delegated to Housing and Residence Life.

General Conduct Standards

All campus activities must maintain safety, accessibility, and orderly operations across University grounds.

Access & Pedestrian Traffic

Activities must not impede pedestrian or vehicular traffic or block ingress and egress to University buildings, spaces, or facilities.

Behavioral Conduct

Groups or individuals must not engage in harassment, physical abuse, or a "heckler's veto" that precludes a speaker from being heard.

Academic & Process Continuity

Events or activities must not disrupt scheduled classes, educational activities, or essential University operational processes.

Property & Environmental Care

Groups hosting events/activities are responsible for maintaining cleanliness, prompt trash disposal, and ensuring no damage occurs to University property.

Outdoor Gatherings & Event Coordination

Spontaneous outdoor gatherings are permitted, but managed events require formal coordination.

Spontaneous Outdoor Gatherings

Expressive Activity Permitted

Expressive Activity is permitted without prior reservation in any open outdoor Space, provided it does not disrupt educational activities (subject to certain conditions).

Small Outdoor Gatherings

Small gatherings under 40 off-campus people may occur outdoors without reserving Space.

Managed Events Requiring CRES

Formal Coordination Triggers

Events require coordination with the CRES Office with at least **48 hours' notice** under any of the following conditions:

- Expect over 150 people
- Involve public figures
- Invite the public and expect over 40 off-campus attendees
- Additional conditions

Space Reservation Priorities

Highest Priority: Activities and academic functions for which the space is designed.

- 1 University Groups:** Highest priority among non-design activity space requests.
- 2 Student Organizations:** Second priority tier for general campus space reservations.
- 3 Sponsored Non-University Groups:** Third priority tier for affiliated external reservations.
- 4 Individuals & Non-University Groups:** Lowest priority.
Non-University groups are strictly permitted to reserve non-recreational outdoor space only at Belk Plaza and West Quad.

25Live Space Reservation

All scheduled activities must be recorded in the 25Live system via CRES.



Campus Reservations & Tracking

CRES handles most campus space reservations. All scheduled activities must be recorded in the University space reservation system, currently 25Live. This record assists Support Services in communicating emergency messages and tracking space availability.



Compliance & Policy Enforcement

Failure to record scheduled activities may result in reservation fees, event cancellation, or the loss of event-hosting privileges.

Major Event Classification & Safety

Major Event Criteria

Primary Scale & Impact

A Major Event includes gatherings/events:

- anticipating over 150 attendees with non-affiliated individuals,
- featuring public figures,
- likely to significantly affect campus safety and security, or
- with substantial likelihood of interfering with other University-sponsored events.

Additional criteria listed in [University Policy 601.6, Section II.9.](#)

Safety Conditions

Secondary Criteria Threshold

Events are also classified as Major Events if they meet **two or more** of the following conditions:

- **Open to the public**
- **Ticketed** event
- **Extending operating hours**
- **Serving alcohol**
- Using **outdoor amplified sound or light**
- **Complexity** of the event requires the involvement of more than one University administrative unit.

Physical Displays & Chalking Policy

Physical displays and chalking are subject to specific location and time restrictions across campus.

Structures

Approval & Advance Notice Required

Tents, booths, and banners require written approval from **CRES** at least **10 business days** in advance of setup.

Postings

Designated Bulletin Boards Only

- Flyers and posters may only be attached to designated **"General Purpose" bulletin boards**.
- Posting on walls, doors, windows, or trees is strictly prohibited.

Chalking Rules

Horizontal & Rain-Exposed Surfaces

- Permitted only by University Groups or Student Organizations using washable chalk.
- Vertical surface chalking is strictly prohibited.

Painting Restrictions

Free Expression Tunnel Only

- Located under Johnson Alumni Way on the Toby Creek Greenway.
- Painting is strictly limited to the interior of the Free Expression Tunnel.
- Painting on any other campus surface or structure is treated as property damage.

Niner Insider - Free Speech Edition

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Editor's Note: Every fall, we share these important reminders with Niner Nation about free speech and the associated resources available to the campus community.



Free Speech on Campus

Today's special edition of Niner Insider is all about [free speech on campus](#). Get an overview of campus resources like the Demonstration Activity Resource Team (DART) and Conferences, Reservations and Events Services (CRES), and take a comprehensive look at relevant policies and laws, including institutional neutrality. We hope this will give you a foundational understanding of Charlotte's commitment to free speech and prompt you to learn more.

- **Start here:** This video is a quick [overview of free speech at UNC Charlotte](#).
- **Three tips:** In [this short video](#), Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Kevin Bailey offers three tips to help you navigate divisive interactions.
- **FAQs:** From policies on protests and speakers to academic freedom, check out [these frequently asked questions](#).
- **Free speech — What does it really mean?:** Kathleen Nicolaides, J.D., emeritus teaching professor in the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology, provides insight into the nuances of [free speech and the role of higher education](#) in fostering its expression.

What is DART?

[Demonstration Activity Resource Team](#), or DART, provides guidance and policy direction for individuals and groups seeking to organize on campus. DART ensures compliance with University policies related to free speech and supports campus demonstration activities, focusing on ensuring a [safe environment for everyone](#). Learn more about DART and its services in this [explainer video](#).



Conferences, Reservations and Events Services

DART works closely with the Conferences, Reservations and Events Services (CRES) team to ensure those seeking to gather on campus are able to do so within the parameters of campus policy and applicable law. [Find out when reservations are required by engaging with CRES.](#)

Understanding Free Speech at Charlotte



Expressive Activities

DEFINITION

*All forms of expression that occur on the University Campus and that fall within the ambit of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, which may include, but not be limited to, **assembly, demonstration, speech-making, oral presentation, protest (including silent protest), marching, picketing, signs, leafleting, petition circulation, distribution of written materials, counter-protest, symbols, and similar expressive communications and activities that are **non-commercial** in nature.***

Academic Mission

- Freedom of speech is central to the academic mission, and the University actively encourages open, civil debate.

Open Discourse

- Fosters an environment where diverse views and ideas can be freely expressed and debated.

Reasonable Limitations

- University may impose reasonable limitations to fulfill its role as an urban research university.

Neutrality

- Use of campus Space does not represent University endorsement of expressed viewpoints.

Institutional Neutrality & Free Speech

CORE POLICY

*UNC Charlotte supports **open debate without endorsing specific viewpoints.** The University does not deny the use of space based on the content or viewpoint of the speech.*

Protections & Responsibilities

- **Protection of Rights:** University will actively take steps to protect the freedom of speech and assembly for any individual or group on campus.
- **Conduct Boundaries:** University does not accept behavior that violates the freedom of speech, assembly, or movement of others.
- **Civil Rights:** Responsible dissent carries a requirement of sensitivity for the civil rights of others.

Free Speech Website

Find a wealth of resources on the University's Free Speech website: freespeech.charlotte.edu

FAQs

- General free speech FAQs
- Controversial speakers
- Protests
- Academic freedom

See: freespeech.charlotte.edu/faqs/

Policies, Regulations & Laws

- University Policies related to free speech
- Other campus/system policies & regulations related to free speech on campus
- Laws related to free speech on campus

Resources

- Campus Resources
 - Dean of Students, Civil Rights & Title IX, DART, SASS, etc.
- External Resources
 - UNC System resources; unaffiliated campus free speech organizations

News & Updates

- Relevant news and updates on free speech matters affecting campus

Understanding Demonstration Activity Resource Team (DART)



Safe Demonstration Guidance

What is DART?



The Demonstration Activity Resource Team (DART) provides information for, observes, and responds to campus demonstration activities, including protests, marches, sit-ins, takeovers, and literature distribution.

Who is DART?



DART is led by the Department of Safety and Security and is comprised of university faculty and staff with skills and expertise in free expression, resource management, facility management, and event coordination.

Safe Demonstration Guidance

Safety & Security Planning



CRES consults with the Department of Safety & Security regarding the logistical planning of gatherings to prioritize public safety.

DART Responsibilities



- DART is available as a resource to provide guidance to comply with University policy relating to use of space and free speech.
- DART observes and responds to campus demonstration activities, including protests, marches, and literature distribution, to maintain a safe environment.

Safe Demonstration Guidance

Areas for Free Speech

Generally, individuals may express themselves in any outdoor Space on campus. However, certain events may require advance reservations, especially if they involve large gatherings, amplified sound or the use of specific equipment or structures.

Groups that are not affiliated with the University may only reserve space at:

- **Belk Plaza**
- **West Quad**

Groups that have reserved space have priority use of the area. Reserved space may not be transferred to another group or individual without prior approval.

Campus Space Usage Resources

Refer to CRES, DART, and the Free Speech website for guidance on campus Space usage.

CRES & 25Live

CRES Office

- Essential for reserving campus space.
- Records all events in 25Live.
- Coordinates Major Events on campus.

DART & Safety

Demonstration & Safety Guidance

DART: Key resource for safety guidance during protests and demonstrations on campus.

Free Speech Resources

Free Speech Website

Provides detailed FAQs on First Amendment principles and institutional neutrality.

University Policy 601.6

Review the full Policy online for comprehensive guidelines on campus space usage, including expressive activities.

Questions & Contacts



Contacts

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